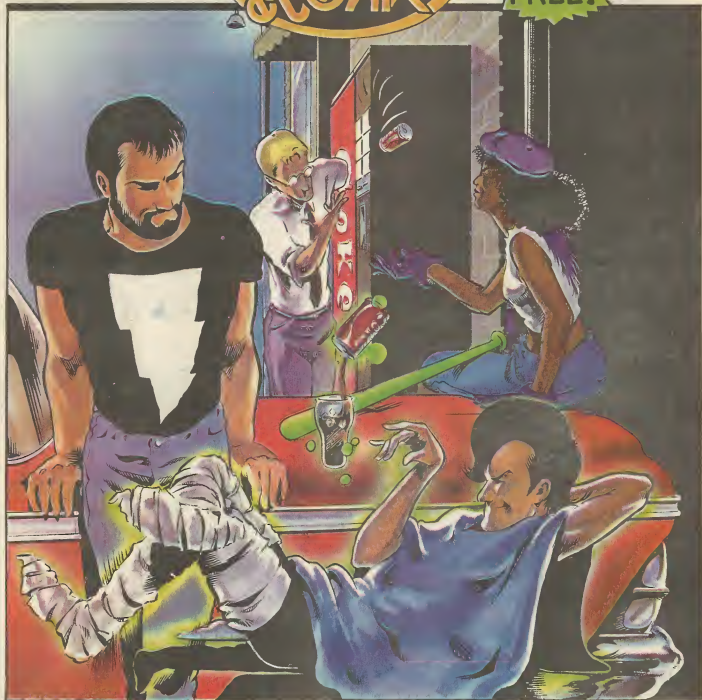


THE TELEGRAPH WIRE

COMICS
& CONIX

ISSUE 22

FREE!



M. MCGEE / KRIETH '85



This is the final installment of FIT TO BE TIED, a column that owes its inspiration and thanks to Cat Yronwode. Thanks, also, from ye editor to ROBOTTECH inker Chris Kalnick for this snazzy sign-off logo.

This is perhaps the hardest editorial I've ever had to write. It's also my last.

Beginning next issue, Wendi Lee will be taking over the editorship of THE TELEGRAPH WIRE. Wendi's been holding the fort as my west coast assistant for the past six months or so and has already made her presence felt on the WIRE. She's been handling the mailing, subscriptions, and advertising solicitations as well as contributing a variety of articles and reviews to the last few issues. And now she's about to take on the whole megillah. (Get ready, gal!) For those of you who have "suffered" through my occasional rampages on the state of women in the comics industry, you'll no doubt agree how fitting it is that my successor be a woman--especially one as talented and downright nice as Wendi.

This, of course, means that the address of the WIRE is changing--again. So sharpen your pencils and jot this down. All press releases, ads, letters of comment, subscription requests, and spare change should now be sent to:

Wendi Lee
THE TELEGRAPH WIRE
c/o Comics & Comix
405 California Avenue
Palo Alto, CA 94306

It seems forever and a day since Tim Wallace and I put together the first issue of the WIRE--thanks, in part, to Sue Honor's unflinching nudges in that direction. Sooz was determined that Comics & Comix should have a newsletter. Little did Tim and I realize, when we volunteered our efforts, just exactly what we were in for! And who'd have thought

that, by issue #8, the WIRE would become a full-fledged magazine, not to mention a full-time job?

Those early Xeroxed issues were a lot of fun. Tim and I spent many long hours at the Cafe Med planning each issue and many late nights writing articles. Our select group of readers (circulation: 200) were treated to such deathless tracts as Tim's notable dummo ray exegesis or the unforgettable (will I ever live it down?) purple-prosed romance issue. At the time, I was learning production the hard way--by the seat of my pants, basically. Tim calligraphed all our logos back then and gave me my first lessons in paste-up.

When I lost Tim to the upper administrative reaches of Comics & Comix at just about the same time that the WIRE expanded its format, esteemed letterer and good friend Tom Orzechowski stepped in to lend a hand with each issue. Tom designed our cover logo, taught me much about page layout, and more than once dropped his own demanding workload to help me beat the Dreaded Deadline Doom.

Young Matthew Denn also supplied a much-needed shoulder to lean on in those early days. He began by writing articles, then took on the thankless task of transcribing all the interviews, and finally inaugurated the WIRE's first review column, "The Lion's Denn." And while I scrambled madly to meet deadlines, Matt could always be counted on to write the news column in a pinch. Bright, infuriating, and always funny, Matt certainly kept us all on our toes. Who could forget the great stir he caused with his DALGODA review? Not me--I heard about it for months afterwards!

There are two other people worth mentioning here.

THE TELEGRAPH WIRE #22, August/September 1985. Published bimonthly by Comics and Comix, Inc. Office of Publication: 405 California Avenue, Palo Alto, CA 94306. Copyright (C) 1985 individual contributors. All rights reserved. Subscriptions: \$5.00/six issues. Publisher: John Barrett. Editor: Diana Schutz. Love and Encouragement: Bob Schreck. Assistant Editor: Wendi Lee. Cover Logo: Tom Orzechowski. Cover Illustration: Matt Wagner and Sam Kieth, color courtesy of Comico the Comic Company. MAGE is TM and (C) 1985 Matt Wagner. Printed at Western Offset in San Diego, with thanks to miracle-worker Anne Etheridge. All information contained herein is accurate to the best of our knowledge. (Would I lie to you?) This issue is dedicated to Tiny and Whitey, in appreciation of their loving support.
***** 2 *****



Editor Schutz bids a fond farewell to the warm California climes and elects to stay in the chilly east...for the time being, anyway!

Both Clay Geerdes and Butch Lee contributed enormously to the development of the WIRE, and the magazine would not have become what it is today without their support. Clay provided an important critical outlook on the industry with his "Comix World/Wave" column and acted as my unofficial sounding board while I was still pounding the Berkeley beat. And Butch illustrated the very first "Fit to be Tied" logo (with lettering by Tommy O.) and never once let me rest lazily on my laurels!

As the WIRE grew in scope and prominence, letters of support and encouragement began arriving from various comics professionals all across the country and I was further surprised to find myself approached by more and more talented people wanting to write for the magazine. Talk about instant job gratification!

I am quite frankly flabbergasted at how the number of WIRE columnists has grown in the last few years, and our current crop is a gifted bunch indeed. With this special San Diego Con issue, we not only welcome back John Barrett and Tom Whitmore to the fold with "Eccentric Evolutions" and "S.F. Sidelines," respectively, but we're also pleased to introduce Steve Perrin with his new feature, "...and Games."

In addition to regular columnists Mark Burbey and Thom Roman, Ann Schubert and Wendi Lee contribute a special section of articles on Japanese animation, while "Sooper Heroes" writer Don Chin varies his usual format this issue to present an interview with Raphael, of TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES fame. This issue's cover artist and feature interview subject

is MAGE creator/writer/artist Matt Wagner, who gave me one of the best interviews (and an outstanding cover) to ever hit the pages of the WIRE. All in all, I feel like I'm definitely going out in style!

And what of ye soon-to-be former editor? Well, by the time you read these words, I'll have already jumped the fence and joined the Comico family as editorial coordinator and editor of their ROBOTTECH series of comics, sashaying my female perspective out of the WIRE and into the hallowed Comico halls. So rev up that Varitech, it's time for me to take off, eh?

One last thing before I go. My thanks to Tom Walton and Dick Swan, my severest critics on the WIRE, for constantly butting their heads in my direction and thereby keeping me thinking and progressing. Special thanks, also, to big boss John Barrett for giving me the room to grow and the space to be myself.

THE ORIGINAL PINHEADS



THE TELEGRAPH WIRE has recently uncovered startling evidence suggesting that Bill Griffith's Zippy is not the original pinhead. This photo, taken in 1967, indicates that a race of female fuzzy-topped pinheads had already invaded the planet at least one year before the first appearance of Zippy the Pinhead. Shocking but true!

EGGENTRIC EVOLUTIONS

by JOHN BARRETT
PUBLISHER

It's been awhile since I've had the time to sit at my desk and pound out this column. Usually, the winter months on into early spring are Comics & Comix' "downtime." This is the period for rest and relaxation. Old projects are finished off and new ones are hatched. The staff and company are revitalized to face the onslaught of summer business.

This, however, has been far from a normal year! We relocated our Palo Alto store in February; stop by, if you haven't already, it just might be the finest looking store in our industry--and if I sound like a proud papa, you're right!

We also seem to be involved in conventions every other week! The American Bookseller's Association trade show, held in San Francisco's Moscone Center, was of particular interest. Attendees included publishers, distributors, press, and retailers from around the world, and we were able to preview what the trade has in store for us in the coming year. Comics enjoyed a prominent spot, as their inclusion in the Waldenbooks line has made mainstream bookstores sit up and take notice. This is an excellent development for our industry, as many of the titles now being published need greater exposure in order to flourish. A number of the comic publishers are diversifying their lines to capitalize on this important market segment, for example First Comics' OLIVIA calendar venture (check it out--it should be *hot!*), Marvel's videotapes of their animated TV series, and the various graphic novels we've enjoyed. Warning to those in the business end of our industry who missed this year's event: if you continue to pass on the ABA you could be left in the dust! (This year's ABA was so large that there was a waiting list for space that began last November--and, believe me, Moscone Center is no small place!)

Also of note, the Star*Reach trade show, held in Oakland, was a gathering place and forum for professionals in our industry who take comic retailing seriously. This was a regional show (although it was attended by storeowners from Dallas, New York, Indianapolis, and other parts of the country) and the first attempt by Mike Friedrich. Its success has prompted Mike to take the show on the road and is a big step forward for the business. Comics & Comix picked up many great ideas and you, the customer, will benefit from these--past ideas implemented after attending similar affairs include the "Comic Hotline," "Birthday Bucks," and the "Comic Saver" program...not to mention a little thing called THE TELEGRAPH WIRE!

As I run out of time and space, I would like to remind you that there are many fine comic stores around the country and you may wish to drop in and see some of them in your travels. Here's a little list of some of the better ones I am familiar with. Tell them John from Comics & Comix sent you!

Hi-De-Ho Comics & Fantasy
525 Santa Monica Blvd.
Santa Monica, CA 90401
Tel. (213) 394-2820

Golden Apple Comics
7711 Melrose Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90046
Tel. (213) 658-6047
Two stores, call for locations.

Comic Kingdom
1629 University Ave.
San Diego, CA 92103
Tel. (714) 291-1515

Andromeda Bookshop
741 De La Guerra Plaza
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
Tel. (805) 965-2400

Top Notch Comics (a Mile High affiliate)
308 S. Broadway
Denver, CO 80209
Tel. (303) 777-5911

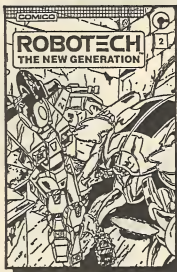
Lone Star Comics & Science Fiction
7738 Forest Lane
Dallas, TX 75230
Tel. (214) 373-0934
Four stores, call for locations.

Fantastic Worlds Bookstore
3011 Lackland Road
Fort Worth, TX 76116
Tel. (817) 731-6222
Four stores, call for locations.

Comics Vol. III
21505 Norwalk Blvd.
Hawallian Gardens, CA 90716
Tel. (213) 865-4474

Comic Carnival & Nostalgia Emporium
6265 N. Carrollton Ave.
Indianapolis, IN 46220
Tel. (317) 253-8882
Three stores, call for locations.

COMING IN SEPTEMBER!



—**ROBOTECH The New Generation #2:** In this issue, "The Lost City," Scott and Rand search for surviving **ROBOTECH** soldiers, only to be betrayed to the inviol Jack Herman scripts, Dave Johnson pencils, and Tom Poston inks.

As Seen on
TV!

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[Page 1] MAGE #9 and © 1989 Matt Wagner

—**MAGE #9:** With several months spent apart from each other, our heroes have had time to hone their skills. Now, ready for battle, they close in on the enemy! Matt Wagner writes, pencils, and colors, Sam Klieh inks.

Also in this issue, chill to the excitement of the darkness which is **GRENDL**, a four page back-up feature. Matt Wagner writes, pencils, and colors, and Rich Rankin inks.



GRENDL, TV and © 1989 Matt Wagner

—**ROBOTECH The Macross Saga #6:** Rick Hunter joins the **ROBOTECH** force while the crew of the SDF-1 continue to elude their Zentredl attackers. Jack Herman scripts, Mike Leeke pencils, and Chris Kainick inks.

As Seen on
TV!

Retailers! Contact your distributor to increase your orders. You can be sure you'll receive these books if you act now!

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Comics worth reading!

MAIN LINES

Bring on the women! Some fantastic females are making the current comics news scene. To start, Trina Robbins brings back the teen fashion comic to Marvel with MISTY, the latest entry into Marvel's Star line of comics. Scheduled to debut in August, MISTY features the teenaged actress Misty Collins, niece of the Marvel superstar of the '50s and '60s, Millie the Model. True to the tradition of fashion comics, all of the clothing designs used in MISTY will be sent in by the readers and each issue will have 3-4 pages of paper dolls with reader-designed fashions.

In October, Trina's adaptation of Tanith Lee's THE SILVER METAL LOVER will also hit the stands. Published by Harmony Books, this beautifully illustrated and colored 64-page graphic novel will retail for \$8.95.

The long-awaited WOMEN AND THE COMICS

has finally been released and, yes, it was well worth the wait. Published by Eclipse and written by Cat Yronwode and Trina Robbins, this is the first definitive look at 20th century female comics creators.

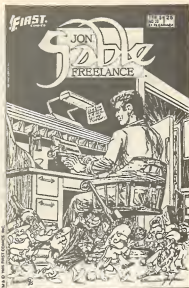
HEROES AND HEROINES OF HISTORY AND FICTION, a new paper doll book by Barb Rauch, is now available for \$12.00 pp. from Colossal Studios, 1018 W. Morris, Modesto, CA 95350. Barb's VICKI VALENTINE #1 should also be out any day now from Renegade Press.

Mary Wilshire will be the regular penciller for Marvel's NEW MUTANTS, beginning with issue #35. Former penciller Bill Sienkiewicz will continue as series inker. Wilshire is the penciller of REO SONJA and has contributed to several other Marvel titles, including POWER PACK. She is also known for her outspoken contributions to female-



Mary Wilshire becomes the regular penciller on NEW MUTANTS.

(C) Marvel Comics Group



oriented undergrounds, such as WIMMEN'S COMIX and AFTERSHOCK.

Writer Christy Marx is publishing a personal newsletter, SCROLLS OF THE SISTERHOOD, which deals with behind-the-scenes information about Marx's Epic comic, THE SISTERHOOD OF STEEL. Ye editor gives this one her personal recommendation and suggests you send a check or money order for \$9.00 (for a six-issue subscription) to: Christy Marx, Box 1952, Wrightwood, CA 92397.

August will see the release of First Comics' 1986 EXOTICA by OLIVIA CALENDAR, priced at \$8.95. Designed by Frank Miller, the calendar will feature the work of Olivia De Berardinis, the air-brush artist renowned for her, ah, suggestive portrayals of women.

One of my favorite women, Cat Yronwode, is interviewed by Educomics' Leonard Rifas in COMICS INTERVIEW #23. That issue also features interviews with Neil Vokes, penciller of Comico's ROBOTECH MASTERS, and Carl Macek, producer of the ROBOTECH TV show. Upcoming issues of COMICS INTERVIEW

will spotlight John Byrne (#25), DC HEROES game designers Greg Gordon and Sam Lewis (#26), and TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES creators Eastman and Laird (#27).

Shipping in October, JON SABLE, FREELANCE #33 will delve into one of B.B. Flemm's (Sable's alter ego) children's books for a bizarre leprechaun story, as SABLE artist Mike Grell is joined by the legendary Sergio Aragones for what promises to be a very strange issue indeed!

TELEGRAPH WIRE editor Oiana Schutz has been named editorial coordinator for Comico the Comic Company. Her responsibilities include proofreading, scheduling, and trafficking the entire line of Comico titles while acting as troubleshooter at every step of production. Schutz is also the editor of Comico's ROBOTECH series of comics and, consequently, will be turning over the editorship of THE



Artwork (C) Harmony Gold/Tatsunoko
ROBOTECH is TM Revell, Inc.

Comics & Comix

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TELEGRAPH WIRE to assistant editor Wendi Lee.

Beginning with the comics shipping in October, all Marvel titles now priced at 65¢ will cost 75¢. However, all Star Comics will remain 65¢, Marvel annuals will stay at \$1.25, and specials and Epic Comics will continue to cost \$1.50. In addition, the Canadian price for all 75¢ comics will be reduced from the previous \$1.00 level to 95¢ in order to more accurately reflect the currency exchange rate as it now stands.

Set for a U.S. debut in December, REDFOX is a new bimonthly title to be published by Harrier Comics. Created, plotted, and drawn by Nottingham-based artist Alastair McGilvray, co-scripted by Mike Lewis, and edited by Harrier publisher Martin Lock, REDFOX features the adventures of a gutsy, self-sufficient female barbarian whose character was influenced to a degree by Dave Sim's Red Sophia.

Rip Off Press has announced the September release of a new comic title, VIPER. Edited by Erick Gilbert, VIPER will present in its 36 pages an international cast of cartoonists, including Dori Seda, Paul Mavrides, Carol Lay, and Dave Cherry from California; Leslie Sternberg from New York; Mike Matthews from England; and Max, Gerbaud, and Pierre Quin from France.

Having worked on a freelance basis for the last



Artwork (C) Phil Lasorda

The editorial coordinator discovered: WIRE editor Schutz joins Comico.

14 years, during which time he co-created Cloak & Dagger for Marvel, artist Ed Hannigan has joined the DC Comics staff as cover editor. He will work with Vice President Executive Editor Dick Giordano and Art Director Richard Bruning to give DC Comics covers a clearer, simpler, bolder look. Hannigan will also design many of the covers as well as work with all of the editors and artists to oversee all cover designs.

And now for a couple of public service messages. San Francisco Bay Area writers, artists, letterers, and colorists who are ready to break into the comics business may be interested in forming a group of "semi-pros" in an effort to help launch each other's professional careers by sharing ideas and information, inviting feedback, and occasionally receiving criticism and advice from one of the local pro comics creators. Potential creators should send their name, address, phone number, and a photocopy of their work to: Markalan Joplin, 808 Post Street #1212, San Francisco, CA 94109.

The COLLECTORS' CLUB NEWSLETTER is a bimonthly digest designed to promote communication between comic book fans who are geographically separated. Each issue features 40-60 pages of letters, comics, fiction, articles, poetry, and more. For a free sample copy send three 1st class stamps to: Collectors' Club, 6233 Pino Real Dr., El Paso, TX 79912.



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SAM KIETH — MAGE INKER

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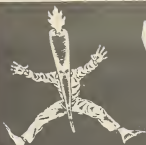
ENTER THE COMICS and CONK FREE DRAWING FOR AN ORIGINAL MATT WAGNER SKETCH!

FLASH FROM THE PAST



Remember long hair, tie-dye t-shirts, and the glory days of comics? Here are some of the StarReach/Marvel Renaissance comics creators, from a photo taken by Clay Geerdes in the early '70s. From left: ALAN WEISS, JIM STARLIN, FRANK and JAN BRUNNER, STEVE ENGLEHART, TOM ORZECZOWSKI, and MIKE FRIEDRICH.

Photo (C) Clay Geerdes. Used here with permission.



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KNOCK-DOWN DRAG-OUT BATTLER!
HE'S THE SUPER-HERO WITH NOTHING TO LOSE!**

WARNING

This comic is not to be read while
driving or operating a motor vehicle.

Upcoming titles from

KITCHEN SINK PRESS

Shown at right: the splash page from *Megaton Man* No. 8 SHIPPING OCT. 1

...and don't miss the exciting *Megaton Man* No. 5 SHIPPING AUG. 6 which features Stella Starlight (also known as See-Thru Girl!)

Shipping also AUG 6 is *SPIRIT* No. 11. 5 more classic Will Eisner stories in original 1946 color.

Leaving the printer in LATE JULY is Eisner's *A Contract With God* ---available from Comics & Comix in both the revised paperback edition and the signed & numbered hardcover ed.

Will Eisner's Quarterly No. 6 ships in Sept. It features a brand-new self-contained Eisner story, "Sunset in Sunshine City" plus an illustrated shop talk with E.C. great Jack Davis, a dissection of Eisner's "A Life Force" and another beautiful reprint of a pre-war *Spirit*.

Eisner's *Big City* book is off press in October. New color covers and a collection of the big city vignettes that ran in *Spirit* Magazine several years back.

Also coming this fall:

THE 3-D SPIRITI

That's right! Four 3-dimensional stories from Will Eisner & Ray Zone.

Plus: **STEVE CANYON** No. 10 in JULY and No. 11 in SEPTEMBER. Look for a giant **STEVE CANYON SPECIAL** in NOVEMBER!

Making its debut in OCTOBER: **DEATH RATTLE**--- a color Baxter science-fiction horror title that will make your skin crawl.

Watch for further details...





THE COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE #596 (April 19, 1985) featured two separate items regarding expanding the comics market and improving public awareness of comics. A "Guest Editorial" by Rick O'Dadiah, publisher of First Comics, and a story taken from a Marvel press release both make note of the fact that "a large portion of the buying public doesn't know comics still exist." This is most certainly true and definitely stands as a situation to be dealt with and rectified, but there's another problem which both pieces failed to address. While many people assume that comics no longer exist, those who are aware of their continued existence equate comics with junk literature, superheroes, and juvenile fantasy. Public awareness works both ways, and it seems to me that it's more important that people be made aware that comics are worth reading, and not simply that they exist. You could mount a massive ad campaign informing the world that Nehru jackets are still being made and sold, but how would you get people to actually buy and wear them?

I've made a habit of harping on this particular subject, and I keep promising myself to stop it and write about something else, but then I walk into my neighborhood comics shop and see the same old superheroes week after week, month after month, year after year. I try to tell myself that it's a little like walking into a record store or a bookstore and expecting to like every single item on the shelves, which is, of course, impossible. In comics, however, there's this mentality that says you've got to buy as much of the available product as humanly and financially possible. You've got to buy every issue of a given series, you've got to have every appearance of a particular character, no matter where he appears or if he appears in only one panel. It's this collector's mentality which has turned comics into something absurd and completely at odds with what it should be: a medium for telling stories, for entertainment. But it is this compulsive, obsessive collector's mentality which the publishers shamelessly feed on and manipulate. Their success or failure depends on getting the reader hooked, addicted, caught up in this whirlwind of merchandising which has nothing whatsoever to do with the art and enjoyment of comics. But then why should comics be any different in this way than movies, or television? And whoever said that business cared about the preservation of art? Certainly not me.

When Marvel talks about expanding the marketplace, they speak in terms of getting their books into more stores, into supermarkets, bookstores, toy stores, and drug stores. Marvel feels that "public ignorance, more than any other factor, is holding back the comics market today. If we can show consumers that comics are indeed available in greater varieties than at any other time in recent years, we can bring those buyers into the comic shops and keep them there." Greater varieties? Oh, really?

The idea that the market can be widened simply by

stronger promotion of its existing line and by expanding upon the number of retail outlets may be true so far as the kiddie market is concerned, but to expect older kids and adults to suddenly get turned on to comics is ludicrous. This will never happen until emphasis is taken off the superheroes and other genres are explored in earnest. And I'm not talking about substituting superheroes with elves, or vigilantes, or space cops, but with westerns, romance, slice-of-life, science fiction adaptations, history, science, etc. I'm talking about comics that exist merely as a medium for telling stories of all types, not only juvenile superhero fantasies. Books like MR. X, LOVE AND ROCKETS, STEVE CANYON, THE SPIRIT, WILL EISNER'S QUARTERLY, JON SABLE, MOONSHADOW, RAGAMUFFINS, HUGO, AMERICAN SPLENDOR, NEAT STUFF, and MS. TREE are only a few of the kinds of books which might appeal to the comics-ignorant public who would only reject superheroes as puerile silliness. Another would be a graphic novel called DADDY COOL, adapted from the novel by the late Donald Goines and illustrated by Alfredo Alcalá, published by Melrose Square/Holloway House, and marketed completely outside the standard comics markets. Though as an example DADDY COOL may well be artistically and conceptually dubious, it is this sort of thing, and not VOID INDIGO and DAZZLER and HUNGER DOGS graphic novels, which will attract the adult readers, but try telling that to Marvel, DC, or First. Try telling them that TIME BEAVERS is not exactly what is going to further the medium or expand the marketplace or appeal to anyone except those already addicted to a diet of adolescent junk.

Both O'Dadiah and Marvel talk about promoting the medium, but neither of them speak of improving it, tapping its unlimited potential for unique visual storytelling. Neither of them seem to understand that they're barking up the wrong tree and that it's going to require some heavy risk-taking and original thinking to change the face of comics and to transform them into a bona fide, respectable, exciting medium of artistic and intellectual substance. I realize that I'm suggesting radical change here, but it will require such radical change if comics are going to grow and if they are to interest anyone over the age of 15.

For the sake of the extremists who suspect me of advocating the complete eradication of all superhero and fantasy comics, let me say that I've been a comics fan since I was 11 years old (which was over 18 years ago), and it was the adventures of superheroes in comic books that originally thrilled and excited me and introduced me to the medium. If I didn't genuinely love the medium for what it is and what it can be, I would have abandoned it long ago. All I'm saying is that there should be comics geared toward all ages and sensibilities, and that until this happens, all the promotion and marketing schemes in the world won't change or improve a thing.

CAN SOMEBODY TELL ME WHY...2000 A.D. #5 sported a "D.R. & Quinch Go To Hollywood" cover, while inside was the conclusion of "D.R. & Quinch Get Drafted"? Now, there actually is a 25-page story called "D.R. & Quinch Go To Hollywood," but it didn't appear in the fifth, or the sixth and final issue of the 2000 A.D. six-issue mega-series.

So what's the deal?

I HATE TO SAY IT, BUT...I think it was a superb idea to reprint the Warren stories by Doug Moench, Paul Gulacy, and Don McGregor as a two-issue micro-series called NIGHTMARES. There is a lot of excellent material floating around that would be well served by this type of reprint format, but we've got a problem here, a problem which also plagued Pacific Comics' BERNI WRIGHTSON: MASTER OF THE MACABRE series. The stories in NIGHTMARES were originally produced for black-and-white reproduction, and Gulacy executed the entire job primarily in pencil or graphite or something similar. Warren's magazines lent themselves perfectly to this sort of richly illustrative approach, and though I couldn't bring myself to buy a predominantly wretched issue of a Warren magazine for the Gulacy story alone, I felt the art itself was some of Gulacy's best. As reprinted by Eclipse, the work still stands as some of Gulacy's finest, but when reduced in size, embellished with color, and perhaps not even half-toned, the whole thing is much too dark and muddy, with much of the detail bleeding into one solid mass of black. The same thing happened, only worse, in BERNI WRIGHTSON: MASTER OF THE MACABRE #2; here we had one of Berni's best stories, "Jennifer," which, again, was produced for a black-and-white Warren magazine and done entirely in eerie tones of grey wash (as were all the stories reprinted in BW:MoTM #2), and thanks to poor reproduction and a shamefully bad coloring job, what was once a beautiful and unique example of a bizarre, chilling, and affecting comic story was reduced to an appalling example of a botched printing job. I don't know enough about the intricacies and eccentricities of comic book printing, but if publishers are going to be reprinting these things, they should work on either selecting the proper material and/or fitting the format to the material, rather than vice versa.

IS IT JUST ME, OR...I've enjoyed JON SABLE, FREE-LANCE from the very first issue, and while I'm not a fanatical fan of Mike Grell's artwork, I've always found him to be a compelling writer. But while I am able to tolerate his rather awkward artwork, I can't help but notice that, as impossible as it may seem, his inking is actually getting quicker and sloppier by the issue. Superficially speaking, I'd say Mike Grell could use an inker, but then, I guess that would cut significantly into Mike's monthly paycheck. On the other hand, I wonder if sales might not pick up if perhaps the art were a bit more appealing...

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, BUT...For most of us, FANTASTIC FOUR was one of the first Marvel books we ever read, and as such, it remains one of those principal titles that is fun to read whenever we're in the mood for some traditional Marvel fun. It's true that, like most Marvel books, FF maintains the status quo by recycling the standard Stan Lee plot lines, but John Byrne is at once the best writer and the best artist to handle the book since the Lee/Kirby/Sinnott days, and he always manages to spice things up with some original and often bizarre twists of his own that save the book from being mere Marvel re-hash. But...I

really didn't appreciate it when, after building towards a rather interesting climax in the recent Hate-Monger story (FF #278-281), readers were expected to find the ultimate conclusion in the pages of SECRET WARS II #2. It strikes me as exceedingly dishonest and manipulative to lead readers along for four issues, only to tell them they've got to buy SECRET WARS II if they want to see how it all turns out. To heap insult upon injury, the "stunning conclusion" in SECRET WARS II amounted to nothing more than four pages in which the storyline was resolved in an altogether slap-dash, superficial, unsatisfying manner. It's one thing to convince readers that it's downright crucial to read SECRET WARS in order to keep current with the ever-changing Marvel Universe (a misleading and transparent merchandising ploy in itself), but it's quite another to deceive faithful readers into following a particular story just to sell a few more copies of this already obscenely successful series. Imagine if viewers of DALLAS or DYNASTY faithfully watched their favorite nighttime soap all season, only to be told, "The exciting climax to DYNASTY can be seen at your neighborhood movie theater! Starting Friday!"

SPEAKING OF FF...the brief appearance of Daredevil in FF #281, drawn by John Byrne and inked by Jerry Drdway, reminded me very much of the late Wally Wood's rendition of the character so many years ago. Daredevil hasn't looked so good since Frank Miller performed his amazing transformation act upon him.

See y'all at the racks, now, y'hear?

Mark Burbey has written about comics and film for such publications as RBCC, CASCADE COMIX MONTHLY, CINEMACABRE, and SWANK, is a contributor to THE COMICS JOURNAL and COMICS INTERVIEW, and wrote THE MARVEL GUIDE TO COLLECTING COMICS. He has also had a number of stories published in DR. WIRTHAN'S COMIX & STORIES.

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ARTIST THE HERO DISCOVERED

AN INTERVIEW WITH MATT WAGNER

MAGE creator Matt Wagner is a young artist whose star is quickly rising. He began his comics career in late 1982 with the introduction of *GRENDL*, clearly the most promising of Comico's early line of ill-fated black-and-white books. *GRENDL* has since dramatically changed its style, added color, and taken up residence as the back-up feature in Wagner's flagship title, *MAGE*. This critically-acclaimed 15-issue limited series not only launched Comico's line of color comics in 1984, but has also brought Wagner's unique storytelling ability to a wider and rapidly growing readership.

Wagner's work will reach an even greater audience this September with the debut of his four-issue *DEMON* mini-series, to be published by DC Comics. And, in August, Wagner himself will embark on a Comico-sponsored cross-country promotional tour in an effort to meet his loyal fans and to spread the word that magic is green.

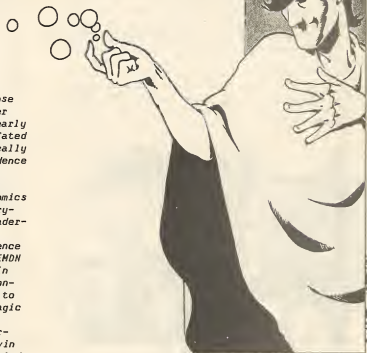
Of the three series, *MAGE* remains the most personal to Matt. Indeed, *MAGE*'s main character, Kevin Matchstick, is modeled after the artist himself. And for those unfortunate one or two of you who haven't yet turned on to Matchstick and *MAGE*, let me say that Matt Wagner is a talented and sensitive artist, an intelligent and articulate individual, and just enough of a skeptic to stay healthy in today's world. And it gives me great pleasure to feature Matt, one of my personal heroes, in my final interview for the *WIRE*.

This interview took place in June at the Bain Sidhe Studio in Philadelphia. It was transcribed by Eric Yarber, copy-edited by Matt Wagner, with final edits by yours truly.

Special thanks are due to Matt, to inker Sam Kieth, and to Gerry Giovenco of Comico for their time and energy involved in producing the beautiful cover illustration for this issue of *THE TELEGRAPH WIRE*.

-- Diana Schutz

DIANA SCHUTZ: All of your heroes, Kevin Matchstick and Grendel and now the Demon, are rather removed from what you'd consider the normal run of heroes, both in comics and in literature in general. So, to start with, what is it that constitutes a hero for you? What is it that makes those three characters heroes?



ARTIST: MATT WAGNER
MAGE is TM and (C) Matt Wagner

MATT WAGNER: First of all, Grendel *isn't* a hero--he's a main character. The difference with all those characters, though it's not really drastic, is that I like to deal with heroes that are flawed, heroes that are very human--even if they're non-human. Even the most inhuman of powers can be human. Otherwise, we just can't relate to it. It was a problem I had reading comics, literature in general. I never really related too well to the ultra cosmic stuff. It's a little too far gone. Fun to read, fun to let yourself go on, especially if pharmaceutically enhanced, but it just never quite touched me *inside*, and that's what I like about flawed heroes: they're much easier to deal with, to relate to.

So far as what I think *makes* a hero, that is a very far-reaching question, because I think heroics reach into every aspect of life, on so many different levels. Heroism exists in a momentary thing or in a lifelong quest, like Kevin's.

DIANA: Let's take Kevin in particular, then. He's a reluctant hero, in a sense. His powers have been thrust upon him--or he perceives it that way, in any case. He's also a cynic, and yet he's very obviously evolving into a hero. What are the aspects of his personality--

MATT: --that make him a hero? I guess when you come right down to it, heroism is realizing your potential. Some people do it in short, sparky moments in their lives, others get their potential well under control and become so-called "great men of society." Utilizing your potential power, I guess--and Kevin just isn't ready to do that. So far as the idea that these powers were thrust upon him, it's not so much that as this just is what he is. He just hasn't realized it before. This is what he's always been.

DIANA: I notice in recent issues that he's becoming less and less reluctant to use his power.

MATT: Well, it's happening a little more without his knowledge. He's starting to give in, much in the same way that in real life you'll find yourself giving into things that you might once have fought against. We all have certain things that break down as life goes on, and his are breaking down. He doesn't realize it and he isn't quite ready for it yet. The power is going to have a very taxing effect on him, and the power he's sampling now is a piddling compared to the power he will ultimately tap into when he sees himself and recognizes himself. These things he's doing now are more reflex than anything else. When he goes into his super feats, so to speak, they're never planned. For one thing, he can't plan them. That's the type of situation it is. His power

DIANA: To go back to the question of heroism for a moment, what is it exactly that fascinates you about the concept?

MATT: Well, one of man's most primeval and ancient urges is to create heroes...although that's another little ditty: do the men create the heroes, or do the heroes create themselves among the men? I'm not really sure of that. In some instances, it's one, I'm sure, and in some instances it's the other. But ever since the beginning of time, man has felt the need to have a hero in his society. There's always been, if not a hero, a leader, a king, a god, etcetera. And I've always been fascinated with why we've chosen to do that. I think it has to do with the fact that we're all so unsure of ourselves. There's so much insecurity in ourselves that if you can focus that needed confidence through a symbolic image--be it visual, aural, whatever--I think it's very heartening for most people.

DIANA: Do you think that we use those images to excuse our own weaknesses?

MATT: Some do. Some use them to build their own strengths. Excuse our own weaknesses and blame our own faults, because in addition to building these heroes, man's also fond of ripping them down.

I like the reluctance of a hero, too. I like the question of his whole freedom of choice--and does he have any? Not necessarily fate, which I guess you could call it in Kevin's case: some great power outside of himself thrusting itself upon his life. But that happens to us all the time--circumstantial events causing us to do things that we might not normally choose to do for ourselves. And that is so prevalent in our lives that there, again, is a reason for a hero. Push that concept even further: "Superfury" everything, and have circumstances thrust upon a person. That's become very prevalent in modern literature, although ancient literature often had the common man turning into a hero. But that theme is extremely prevalent in today's literature. There's less of the divine being of old coming to man's rescue, and more of man himself rising up from under and defeating what he needs to defeat.

DIANA: It's pretty evident that all through MAGE there are many references to Arthurian legend. Do you want to comment on that?

MATT: Well, many many people have pointed that out. I get a lot of letters on the subject. I should also point out that many many people are pretty sure that they know what's going on. Some are close, some have some points right, nobody has gotten it completely right because they're taking it very literally, and I don't take Arthurian legend as literal. It is probably the most archetypal legend in Western literature. You can find traces of it in just about anything. The places it reaches...the Arthurian influence is just immense. Not necessarily in the specific characters intruding on literature, films, etc., but the general plot, the general feel. It just has so much in it: It has glory, it has happiness, it has irony, it has despair, it has sadness. It covers just about the whole spectrum.

DIANA: What led you to it in the first place?

MATT: I don't really know. I just remember at a certain point all of a sudden gaining a heavy interest in it. The thing that attracted me to it, I would say, was that it is so far-encompassing and at the same time so basic in many of its precepts. It's the story of the boy who's raised as a squire becoming king. There especially is a man in circumstances beyond his control who didn't deal with it quite as



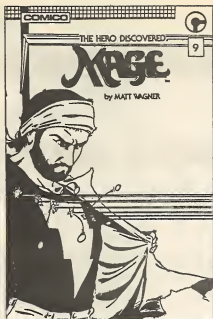
MATT WAGNER flanked by modern-day heroes

Photo courtesy of Comico

is fired by the struggle of good and evil, and it arises when that struggle is there. Further on down the line, I'll get more into the exact logistics of what constitutes the feeding of this power by this struggle, but it's mainly a reflex action now. I have MAGE planned as a trilogy and this is just the first stage: "the hero discovered." At the end of this, he'll finally discover himself, but that doesn't mean he'll be in control of it or ready to deal with it.

DIANA: So MAGE has a continuity after the first 15 issues?

MATT: Yeah, oh yeah. On the base, it has three parts, a trilogy. Underneath that, the first part is divided into four basic segments that are then read as the MAGEBOOK reprints. Beyond even that, it's divided into 15 serial-like chapters. And it jumps around in time. The second and third MAGE, which will most likely be called MAGE II and MAGE III, take place much longer down the road. Kevin will ultimately be much older by the end of the series, and much more complete--even though he doesn't realize how incomplete he's been, or hadn't realized it up until the time Mirth entered his life.



(C) Matt Wagner

well as he could've.

DIANA: One thing that the legend of Arthur doesn't have that MAGE has a lot of is a kind of urbanity.

MATT: Oh, it's there in Arthurian legend. What kind of cities did they have in Arthur's day? They were all castles. It took place in the heart of civilization...and the urban setting is just about as far into the guts of civilization as you can go.

DIANA: GRENDL is full of that urban flair, too, so I gather it's something important for you.

MATT: Yeah. I've lived in an urban setting now for four, five years. It's just teeming with life, and death, and this and that. It's so multi-colored. I like that.

DIANA: You weren't brought up in the city?

MATT: No, not at all. I was raised fairly suburban, well, more rural than suburban. See, with MAGE in

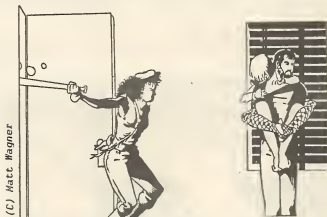


(C) Matt Wagner

GRENDL

general the whole feeling is one of Kevin out of control, Kevin in a world he's not really in control of. I would say the opposite of Grendel. Grendel is taking the world by the throat with his very capable fingers! Therefore, most of the city scenes are very rooftop, very him-looking-down on things. Kevin, on the other hand, is pretty much a panorama of the city. I never really close in on more than above the first or second story. The lighting, too, starts to become weird when Kevin gets more into the supernatural end of things. When things start to calm down, the settings become a little more recognizable, backgrounds start to pop up. There's a scene in issue #7, especially, where they go to retrieve Edsel from her house, and there...it's her house, her room, a fire escape, a brick wall, it's a very bright sunny day and they get her and start to head off into the adventure again. They sink down into the alley from there, and the point of reference becomes much more closed. Kevin's suddenly wrapped in...

Grendel, on the other hand, is entirely the opposite. Grendel takes control. He sees the world as a challenge for him to conquer, more than Kevin, who sees the world as a big bother intruding on his life in many instances. And he knows he has to deal with it. He knows he has to. That's why he doesn't just sit on his ass and say, "To hell with it, I'm not going to do any of this." There is something I can identify with Kevin on very much--



The intrepid Edsel comes to the rescue!

DIANA: How much of you is Kevin?

MATT: Very very much. Not in that I imagine myself as any sort of hero. I don't, in the grand sense that Kevin is. I imagine myself a hero in that everyone experiences moments of certain heroics in their life. Everybody experiences something that they did that they didn't have to do that turned out for the good, and they realized that it was *their* influence, and *their* power that specifically caused this incident to turn out as it did. In a sense, that's sort of a heroic feeling--that slight rush you get after that sort of experience.

But the early Kevin was very much me at that stage in his cynicism. I was cynical at that point. I was going to school part-time. I was drawing GRENDL in a very amateurish fashion. I was very frustrated with my work, my life, etc. Things smooth out. I realized things about myself that I hadn't realized then...and that's one of the reasons I want to keep MAGE going on down the line.

When you're first entering the business you look to the big companies as the mecca that you're someday going to reach. Recently I signed on with DC to do THE DEMON and suddenly it wasn't a mecca anymore. It was very realistic that I could do this, very

probable, and it *was*. Then all of a sudden I realized that here in MAGE, I had the perfect little slot for artistic expression for as long as I wanted. There are certain instances when I'm doing MAGE where I almost feel like I'm not doing it, like it's doing it to me, especially after an issue is just completed: I'm exhausted. Drained out. If I can keep that experience happening to me, I'm going to let it keep happening. That's one of the reasons I don't like to tie the story down. I know basically where it's going, I know what I want to happen in certain respects, but I haven't written it all out. I don't have the 15 chapters planned down to a nail head, because I don't know how my perceptions are going to be at that point, and I don't want it to be the same old shit issue after issue. That's just stagnation.

I can sympathize with Kevin in that you make certain decisions about your life, about your attitude towards society and the world, how you think it ought to be and how you see it functioning, etc. You often realize, too, that you simply have to function within it because this is really all we have. So you find yourself doing things that are reflex more than anything else, and that happens a lot to Kevin even though he doesn't believe this whole scheme. This stuff *happens* to him. These white hairless dudes keep coming after him and big ogres keep throwing him around and there are these little naked dudes with slingshots...so he finds himself having to react and having to use that power. Like I said, he's fairly powerful right now, but it really is nothing yet. He's only tasted a glimmering.

DIANA: Now that you're working for both the mainstream and a small independent company, how does that difference reflect itself in your work?

MATT: You have to be a tad more, let's say, concrete for the larger companies. I can be a little more abstract with Comico. Does that make sense? It might not even be evident in my work, but it's the way I *feel* about it. Then again, I've been working on MAGE a lot longer than I've been doing THE DEMON, but THE DEMON is a much shorter project and I pretty much have it under rein. It's taken me longer to get MAGE under rein. The work is different in style, but GRENDEL and MAGE are different in style, too. I feel that the story merits its own visual style; the story itself will tell you what type of style it needs if you just listen to it. Style is sort of a dirty word these days: feel, texture, what kind of texture the artwork needs for the story. DC's given me a comparatively good amount of freedom, I must say. THE DEMON is the first thing I've ever done for them, and they're letting me write and pencil it. They've made a few pointers here and there, but very minimal. No major changes in what I had planned to do with it originally anyway. The thing I like better, of course, about the big companies is you reach a much vaster audience, and that's the big thing for me. Not so much in getting the sales, 'course that doesn't hurt either, but all artistic types



Kevin Matchstick...

(C) Matt Wagner



(C) DC Comics Inc.

Wagner's DEMON, inked by Rich Rankin

are under the presumption that they're doing their work for people to see it. I really want people to see it, to read it, to look at it.

DIANA: The independents have glorified the fact that they offer creator ownership, and have promised fans that creators would feel more enthusiastic about their own characters and would therefore deliver a better product. Do you see that happening?

MATT: Sometimes yeah, sometimes no. I can make a safe statement and say that artistic types as a whole are generally undisciplined, simply because they are more abstract as opposed to concrete, or flowing rather than nail-it-down. That certainly isn't exclusively true. Some instances, I would say yeah, the creator took one hell of a pride in his product and it continued. Howie Chaykin just keeps FLAGS! a consistently good product. Other books...no pride, no motivation.

DIANA: How do *you* feel? Can you drum up the same kind of enthusiasm for a character that you don't own, that you haven't created?

MATT: That's kind of tough to say. I don't think I could get drummed up to do an inventory story, put it that way. Couldn't get up to do fill-ins. What I'm doing for DEMON is my own thing.

DIANA: It's a story complete in itself.

MATT: Well, complete in itself in that it makes a decisive step in the character, which is somewhat opposed to what he had been, but not really. It's just taking the direction he was pointed in and kicking him five steps ahead. So in that sense, I'm doing basically what I wanted to do with him. I've been fairly lucky with both publishers. Comico's had a lot of faith in me from the beginning,



Photo courtesy of Comico

...a.k.a. MATT WAGNER

letting me do my own thing. That's one thing I must say for Comico: they've never ever tried to editorialize me.

DIANA: Do you want to say anything about the storyline of THE DEMON?

MATT: It will involve the *demonology* of Etrigan. One of the things that struck me about Kirby's DEMON was that he set up a fascinating concept and never explained much more. He set up this great scenario and then it became a basic superhero type thing where super bad guys would show up and Jason would turn in to the Demon and beat the hell out of them and that was about it. I started to get into, "If he's a demon, what has his existence in Hell been like? Why is he Merlyn's guardian servant, why is he so subservient? Why is he Jason Blood?" I explain a lot of things.

DIANA: Let's talk about GRENDEL a little. In the last few issues of MAGE, you've changed the style of GRENDEL completely. Now, at one time you said that GRENDEL was a sort of paradigm struggle between good and evil in which you specifically chose black-and-white illustration because you wanted to make the point that good and evil are sometimes indistinguishable. Now you're designing for color and you've taken on this whole fabulous art deco style, using text rather than word balloons. What is that allowing you to do that you weren't able to do before?

MATT: Well, on the base, it's allowing me to reach more people. The black-and-white thing was a good idea, but I will say right now that there were a lot of good ideas in GRENDEL that just didn't work, simply because those first three issues and the PRIMER story were my training ground. I was learning how to do comics from the bottom up. I also at that point rendered Argent in a scratchier, more detailed pen

style, which I don't do anymore either. The thing is that Grendel has overpowered Argent in my own eyes. I gave Argent a lot of space in the second black-and-white issue. I was very interested in the character at that point. He has since kind of dwindled out a little bit. I'm still trying to make him a powerful force and a *mysterious* force in the story, in that he's withdrawn a lot--he doesn't appear nearly as much. He's always the threat that Grendel is opposing, but he's become just the *next* big opposition in Grendel's gig. Good and evil are kind of useless terms. Grendel isn't...

DIANA: Grendel strikes me as *amoral*.

MATT: Yeah. Not so much evil as just he doesn't care.

DIANA: Although you did introduce him, in fact, as the "evil" Grendel.

MATT: You're talking about the PRIMER story, aren't you? You'll notice the narration on that was very fairy tale-ish. That was intended to be tongue-in-cheek. I still use that a little bit when I refer to Argent as "the wondrous wolf." It's an incredible paradox that the people in Grendel's world *accept* Argent without question. When, in fact, he is just a mutated monstrosity.

I see GRENDEL in a different light now than I did then. There were good ideas I had back then, there were good design motifs, there were good techniques that cropped up--not consistently, but here and there. Since then, I've taken a different mental look at it, and taken a different attitude towards it. At that time, GRENDEL was the only thing I was doing. It was a little more dear to me. It has not become that sort of thing now. Not to say that I don't put *all* I can into it, it's just not the same type of "all." Simply the way you don't relate to your lover in the same way as you relate to your best friend.



(C) Matt Wagner

DIANA: Of the three series, which one's your lover?

MATT: MAGE. THE DEMON I'm doing, in many respects, to show that I *can* do it, that I can do the mainstream stuff. It's also a chance for me to get a feel for that type of storytelling. I don't claim that the alternatives and MAGE and GRENDL are the only way to do comics--certainly not. Beyond that, I don't claim that they're the only way for me to do comics.

On the other hand, right now I get to flex a lot of muscle on GRENDL. I can just go wild with the design. That's one of the reasons I switched to that type of motif. GRENDL also has now become something that I can play with, whereas MAGE and I can play with each other. Earlier I said I get the feeling that I'm not really doing MAGE, that it's doing it to me. I feel with GRENDL that I'm entirely in control.

DIANA: A nice parallel: just like Grendel is in control.

MATT: Yes, and Deco is a *controlled* art style. It is *entirely* controlled. There is nothing spontaneous about it. MAGE, on the other hand, is a little more...

DIANA: Loose.

MATT: Flowing, yeah. And THE DEMON is basically just narrative--with mood and with feeling, but narrative.

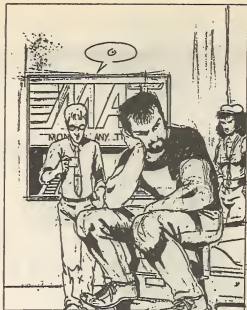
DIANA: Matt, you're part of the new league of writer/artists in the industry. Do you see yourself as more on either side of the coin, more of a writer or an artist?

MATT: That depends on the piece. That really depends on the piece. I'm more a storyteller, and I do it with words and pictures.

DIANA: You're soon to embark on a cross-country tour during which you'll be appearing at retail locations in several major cities. One of the things I'm curious about is who your fans are. Who is going to be in those stores to see you?

MATT: Who reads MAGE, you mean? I get letters literally from all walks. I would say they tend to be a slightly older crowd. First of all, I get a lot of letters from women. I also get a surprising number of letters that say, "Hey, I never ever read comics before someone showed me MAGE." If not letters from those people, then letters from their friends who showed them the book, saying, "I have so many friends who would never touch a comic until MAGE." In fact, Peter Warren, who won the [what is Kevin Matstick's middle name?] contest, said somebody asked him why anyone who was going into graduate school in the fall would still be reading comic books, and he showed them MAGE and they said now they understood. I get a whole lot of letters like that, and boy, that makes me feel great! Because that's what I want to do. I think comics are in danger of locking themselves into becoming a genre as opposed to a medium, which is a line that I think is attributable to Scott McCloud [creator/writer/artist of ZOT!]. It's a perfect line. The biggest selling things now are superheroes. Well, the biggest selling films over this summer are slasher films. That doesn't mean that all films are that sort of bullshit. It really is a special notch in the heart when I've turned on somebody to the new medium and shown them that it isn't a genre.

The youngest letter-writer--or at least the youngest to admit to their age--was a little girl who said she was twelve. The oldest...I get letters from doctors, teachers, businessmen. I got one letter from a fan who was a brokerage consultant and who wanted to know if I had any money I wanted to throw around! It tends to be a slightly older age group. But I don't think MAGE is exclusive to the older reader because I don't try to construct it like that. I



(C) Matt Wagner

A sample of Wagner's pencils, from MAGE #8

try to construct it as a multi-layered thing. If you're looking for more in it, you'll find more in it. If you're specifically in tune to the Arthurian thing, you'll find that stuff thrown in, but you don't desperately need that to enjoy it. It's still an adventure tale that moves along on its own--and it's more than just an adventure tale. It's not wham-bang-sock-'em-up every page. I try and make it a human story that humans can relate to. As far as who I'm going to be seeing on that tour, I'm going to be seeing everybody who comes into that comic shop, that's who I'm going to be seeing on the tour. Hopefully, many more people will be reading MAGE by the end of it.

The tour is an effort by me to reach these people. I want people to see the book. It's just recently--as of the second MAGEBOOK stage, issues 5, 6, and 7--that it all started to click together. We latched on to the right coloring process, the right paper finally, and of course Sam Kieth started as inker with #6. That's brought a new dimension altogether. I've had to tighten up--get more informational. So, on top of that you add Sam's very sensitive ink lines and things are looking up. Now, all of a sudden, the book is where I want it to be, and I want to show people--get in touch with the people who aren't reading it.

And I'd like to meet who is reading MAGE. I'm locked up here in my little studio and the mail doesn't come to me, it comes to Comico. I get it in batches every now and then. So all of a sudden there's this wave of outside response, and that's always a strange little event--reading the fan mail. "Wow, there're people out there reading this!" I'd like to meet some of those people because I've had an effect on them in some way. That's a very difficult concept for most of us to deal with. Here is this thing that I've done just for the hell of it, ever since I was a little kid, and all of a sudden it means quite a bit to people I've never had any contact with. That's mind-blowing in many respects. I'd like to come to terms with it a little bit by meeting them face to face.

FANS CHOOSE DC COMICS!

The Comics Buyer's Guide recently polled comic book fans around the world about their favorite books and writers. With more than 5900 respondents, it was the largest such survey in comic book history. The results were surprising.

- ▶ Favorite cover:
(*New Teen Titans** #1)
- ▶ Favorite stories:
("The Judas Contract" in
*Tales of The Teen Titans**
#42-4, Annual #3
"Who Is Donna Troy?" in
The New Teen Titans #38
"The Anatomy Lesson" in
*Swamp Thing** #21)
- ▶ Favorite direct-only book:
(*The New Teen Titans*)
- ▶ Two of three favorite
books:
(*The New Teen Titans* and
Swamp Thing)
- ▶ Two of three favorite
writers:
(Alan Moore and
Marv Wolfman)
- ▶ Four of nine favorite
characters:
(Ambush Bug* Batman*,
Nightwing* and Swamp
Thing)

When informed of the results of the poll, DC Vice President-Executive Editor Dick Giordano said, "We're working to make our books the best. It's gratifying to know the fans recognize and appreciate that. We thank them."



Dick Giordano

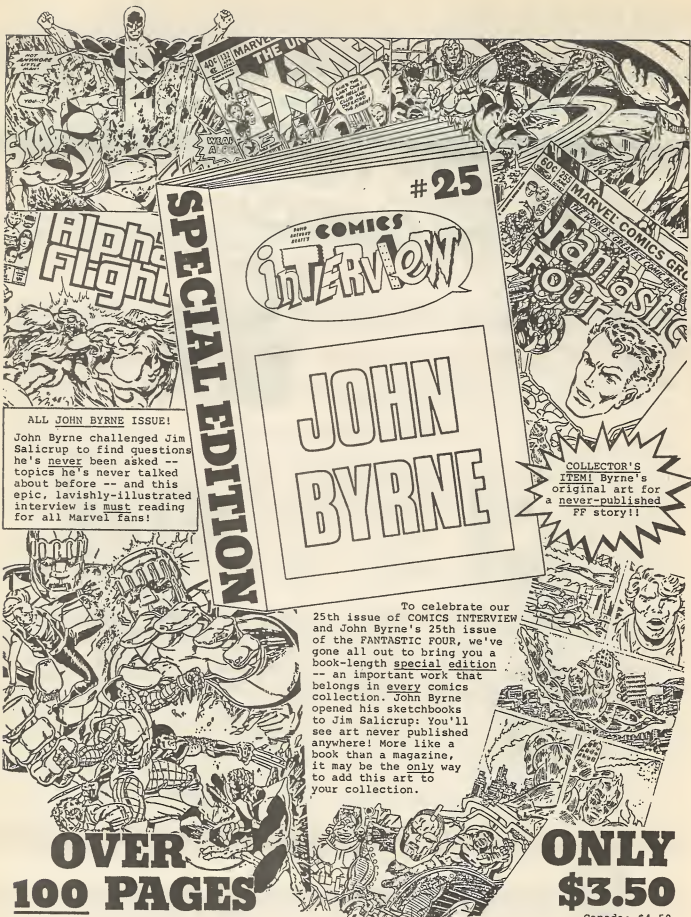


Teen Titans



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#25

COMICS
INTERVIEW

JOHN
BYRNE

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John Byrne challenged Jim Salicrup to find questions he's never been asked -- topics he's never talked about before -- and this epic, lavishly-illustrated interview is must reading for all Marvel fans!

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(C) Eastman and Laird

by Don Chin

Last year the comics industry witnessed the birth of a strange team of reptile vigilantes known as the **TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES**.

This very funny spoof of **RONIN** and **DAREDEVIL** caught on quickly with fans and the press, who both ate the idea up, much to the joy of the turtles, Donatello, Michaelangelo, Leonardo, and Raphael, and creators Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird. **TURTLES** has become one of the best-selling independent comics ever and first printings of issue #1 are commanding up to \$80 on the collector's market.

Success has definitely made the turtles come out of their "shells"—rumor has it that the gang will film an American Express commercial, and a feature-length film directed by Steven Spielberg and George Lucas is in the works. (Just kidding!) On a more realistic level, Laird and Eastman plan to release a series of **TMT** buttons, possibly some t-shirts and a graphic novel, and are revealing the **TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLE** role playing game by Palladium Books this fall, which should complement the **TURTLE** lead miniatures that already inhabit the market!

I recently chatted with one of the ever-elusive turtles, **RAPHAEL**, who seems to be the best-known, if not the most psychotic of the bunch. I found him up on the roof, lounging in a lawn chair soaking some rays while munching on a bowl of algae.

QON: Thanks for joining us today, Raphael. Where are the other turtles?

RAPHAEL: Well, Mike's upstairs watching *Strange Brew* on the VCR for the fiftieth time, Don's modifying one of those radio-controlled jeeps into a *Mad Max* machine, and Leo's either in the cellar working out or reading the new issue of *Rolling Stone*, I don't know which.

QON: How does it feel to be a comic book superstar?

RAPHAEL: Say what? I'm not so sure we're superstars yet. I just hope people are enjoying our adventures.

DON: Why did you choose the sai [a Japanese fork-like weapon] as your specialty?

RAPHAEL: 'Cause it makes for close-in fighting--and I like to see the sweat on the other guy's eyebrows!

QON: How was your childhood?

RAPHAEL: Generally, wet. Seriously, I have three of the greatest brothers anyone could ask for...and Master Splinter is like the father we never had.

QON: Are you really trained as a ninja, or do you employ "stunt turtles" in your book?

RAPHAEL: I pity the man who says that! Splinter has trained us in the ways of ninjitsu since we were but young lads, about thirteen years.

DON: Any comments on your own micro-series book?

RAPHAEL: It's a pretty wild story, with tons of action, featuring a new character named Casey Jones. If you think I'm crazy, wait 'til you see this guy!

QON: What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

RAPHAEL: Swimming, sparring, working out, sleeping, and chasing small yard mammals.

DON: How old are you? Height? Weight? Shoe size?

RAPHAEL: I'm 15 years old, four feet seven inches tall, 150 lbs., and I've never worn shoes.

DON: Any sexual preference?

RAPHAEL: You need a date...

DON: Uh, okaaay! Ahem...do you find any advantages to being a turtle in a predominantly human environment? Any disadvantages?

RAPHAEL: Let's see...well, I don't have to wear a bathing suit when I go swimming. On the other hand, I have to do most of my swimming at night.

QON: How many thugs have you killed?

RAPHAEL: Several.

QON: How many thugs have you maimed?

RAPHAEL: More than several...and they know they've tangled with me.

DON: Please tell us your favorite musician, movie, and food.

RAPHAEL: Bruce Springsteen, *The Terminator*. As far as food goes, I'll eat just about anything...but I love Michaelangelo's stir-fry veggies!

DON: Any closing comments to our readers?

RAPHAEL: Keep your eyes peeled for the wildest adventures yet, coming in issues 4, 5, and 6 of our book! And watch out for **FUGITID**, coming in August! Buy 'em...or else!

QON: Hey! I didn't say you could plug your books in my column! You think I'd sell out that easily, kid?!

RAPHAEL: GRRRRRRRRRR!

QON: Okay! Okay! I'll plug 'em! I'll plug 'em! Now would you please stop dangling me from the top floor of this building????? MAMAAAAA!

Remember...all floral arrangements, review items, kinky letters, and spare \$100 bills should be sent to me c/o General Hospital, Room 408. NURRRRRRSE!

Special thanks to Peter Laird and Kevin Eastman for all their assistance in arranging this interview and for scooping me off the pavement.



Well, I'm back, he said. The reviewing muscles are probably a bit out of shape, but I hope to get them back by regular exercise. Let's start off with a book from a new line of SF. The line is Bantam Spectra, brought to you by the people who have made Bantam one of the most interesting SF lines currently publishing. The author is R.A. MacAvoy, whose *TEA WITH THE BLACK DRAGON* was the surprise first novel of 1982, and whose *Damiano Trilogy* established that she could do wonderful historical fantasy. Now she combines contemporary characters and a historical setting in *THE BOOK OF KELLS* (Bantam Spectra, \$3.50), producing a fine book that should disappoint none of her old readers and win her many new ones. It starts with John Thornburn, an art student in modern Dublin, tracing the pattern on an ancient Irish cross, while listening to a tune on the record player. To his great surprise, a naked young woman, Ailesh, appears out of thin air. She turns out to be a survivor of a Viking massacre of her Irish village of 985 A.D. John, who is a very nice but spacey guy, and his tough lover Derval O'Keane get dragged back with Ailesh to her time and proceed to try to get the king to pay the blood price on the village with the help of the only other survivor, a harper named Labres MacCullen. This is a standard sort of fantasy plot, but MacAvoy doesn't do any of the standard things with it. She gives her characters difficulty with the language, shows their mistakes, and even makes the Vikings sympathetic. The historical setting, researched by Sharon Devlin, is very real. Part of the plot even hinges on getting stuck on the wrong tune! This is the best book from MacAvoy yet and leaves me waiting eagerly to see how different her next book is.

A new Amber novel. Why bother, I thought, when I saw it was coming. The previous story was quite complete enough, and I really felt Zelazny was getting tired by the time *THE COURTS OF CHAOS* came out. But to my surprise the story in *TRUMPS OF DOOM* (Arbor House, \$14.95) is not the problem. It's nicely exciting, following Corwin's son Merlin from Earth to Amber and several other interesting Shadows. Court intrigue is still the driving force behind the events of the book, and several of the old crew make minor appearances. The book is more deliberately paced than *NINE PRINCES IN AMBER*, but not as slow as some of the other books. But the silly thing is only half a book! If you thought *NINE PRINCES* ended on an unacceptable cliffhanger, don't read this book. I thought *NINE PRINCES* was a complete novel, and the other books were nice but unnecessary filler. This one is simply not complete. If you possibly can, wait until he's finished at least the next one before you start, or you'll just be as annoyed at Zelazny as I am.

Two paperback originals by relatively new authors are both fun: not the deepest SF I've read in the past 26

year, but good escape reading. Melisa C. Michaels' *SKYRIDER 1: SKIRMISH* (Tor, \$2.95) is fairly realistic solar system space opera. Melacha Rendell is the Skyrider, a hotshot rocket jockey who runs shuttle trips for the Earth Company through the asteroids. She took no side in the previous war between Earth and the asteroids, but now that the Company is forbidding pilots from supplying the independent asteroid miners, she finds her stubborn independence getting her in trouble. Like most of the other pilots of her acquaintance, she smuggles supplies to the independents. Now she is the only pilot capable of docking with the *Marabou*, a ship sabotaged on its way from Mars to Earth, before its velocity gets too great to allow it any chance of landing. She has to deliver a replacement pilot to it who can land it. And someone doesn't want to see her succeed. Melacha is definitely of the Han Solo school of pilots, but somewhat better drawn, and with a few more problems than Solo had. Like having to live with the Newtonian laws of motion... The story is a comfortable one, nothing new but nicely done for what it is. There's room for more stories, but no pressing unanswered questions.

Melissa Scott's second novel *FIVE-TWELFTHS OF HEAVEN* (Baen, \$2.95) is also good space opera with some nice twists. The opening is rather clichéd: woman on a patriarchal world has to find a man to front for her as owner of a space vessel. After this unpromising start, though, Scott goes off with one of the more original space drives (powered by magic, to which technology is antithetical) and a fairly interesting tale of intrigue and the search for lost Earth. A nice touch is that the pilots, like the heroine Silence Leigh, keep their knowledge of how to move between worlds as a guild secret: esoteric knowledge has always been part of magic. Unlike *SKIRMISH*, the ending is unsatisfactory; Scott only takes her crew halfway. Still, the book has a lot to recommend it.

Short comments: William Gibson's *NEUROMANCER* was the Nebula novel winner and is a Hugo nominee; both of you who haven't read it should go do so. David Brin's next *Uplift* novel (set in the universe of *SUN-DIVER* and *STARTIDE RISING*) has been delayed until summer of next year so he could complete a comet novel with Gregory Benford. And Tanith Lee's *THE SILVER METAL LOVER* will be published in a comic novel format by Harmony Books (\$8.95) in October, with illustrations by Irina Robbins. Keep reading, folks!

Tom Whitmore is a well-respected member of the science fiction and fantasy field. A contributor to various fanzines, Tom is also co-owner of *THE OTHER CHANGE OF HOBBIT*, a fine SF and fantasy bookstore, located in Berkeley's Sather Gate Mall, at 2433 Channing Way.

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CHAPTER I
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STREAK

IN THE AMAZING
ORIGIN OF

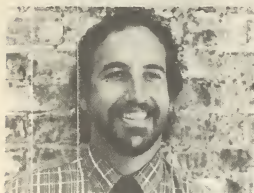
ARMOR

A 5 ISSUE SERIES FROM CONTINUITY COMICS ON SALE IN AUGUST

CENTERFIELD

by Wendi Lee

You may think it's easy to run a comic book store--or even a chain of stores--efficiently and profitably. Not so. With seven locations and variations in what's popular in each location, both the purchasing and the company administration can get very complicated indeed. COMICS & COMIX CENTRAL refers to the people who keep the company running smoothly. Our jobs may seem defined, but we're all trained to help out at the counter and willing to do it.



JOHN BARRETT

Have you ever wondered who buys all those back-issue comic books that you pick up each month? Meet DICK SWAN, our Senior Purchaser. Dick is one of the industry's leading authorities on Golden and Silver Age comics. Ask him what villain appears in GREEN LANTERN #10 and he'll even tell you how the villain was introduced! He's the ultimate trivia buff!

Affectionately known as "The Big Guy," Dick has been with the company since its early days and can tell embarrassing stories about John Barrett and Bud Plant! He also excels at playing devil's advocate--just ask the Chief! Another one of Dick's many talents is knowing how to have a good time--too bad he can't remember half of them! (Just teasing, Swan.)



SCOTT MAPLE

TOM(CAT) WALTON has been with the company for five and a half years as the Public Relations Director. His responsibilities include paid ads and company promotions, both internal and external. He's the man behind the scenes but always in front of the camera! He recently got the Comics & Comix name in the *San Francisco Chronicle* when we bought a rare copy of SUPERMAN #1. Tom says his favorite part of the job is working with movie promotions. Must be all those free movie passes he gets! Just kidding, Tom.

JOHN BARRETT is one of the founding owners of C&C. His title is Chief Executive Officer, but we just call him "Chief". When asked to define his job, the Chief replied, "The buck stops here...and don't call me 'Chief!'"

John started Comics & Comix because of his interest in collecting comics. When I asked him if he still collected, he told me that his family has now displaced his comic collection. He still keeps up with the trends and is currently interested in toys like the original Robbie the Robot. When asked what he likes about being Chief, John said, "There's never a dull moment. Something new always pops up. I enjoy traveling and meeting people at conventions and trade shows. Working within the store is like having an extended family. We work better that way. Some of our best products were found through our people rather than someone who was hired to tell us what we should sell."



DICK SWAN

SCOTT MAPLE is our Regional Manager and makes sure that things run smoothly. We send all our bills to Scott and let him have the nervous breakdown! He's been with the company for a decade or more and still has a good idea for every occasion!

Scott is a serious LITTLE ARCHIE collector. Does anyone have a #3 out there???

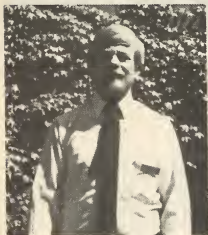


TOM WALTON

SUE HONOR holds the (ahem) distinction of Personnel Manager. She's been here for four years and her interests extend beyond the comics realm. While she's become an avid comics collector, she also finds time to be a Guild Mistress for the Renaissance Faire held up in Novato, Marin County in August and September every year. In what's left of her free time, Sooz is currently pursuing her MBA while still managing to take care of her menagerie of pets, including a dog, some cats, and a certain long-legged mollusk!



SUZANNE HONOR

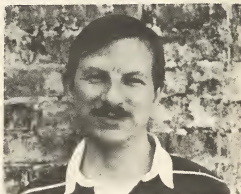


JOHN MEANS

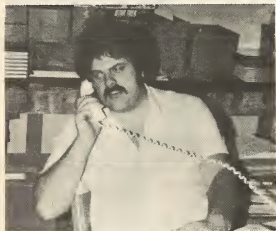
JOHN MEANS handles all the details between stores. It's a lot of running around, but he makes sure we get everything we need when something special is happening in a specific store. John sports the title of General Manager and gets to take the blame for other people's mistakes!

TIM WALLACE works with figures. No, no, no. Not those kinds of figures! He works with columns and numbers and sales projections and all the stuff that your parents tell you is going to get you somewhere. Well, it got Tim off the Berkeley counter where he used to sell punk rocks to rasta preppie low riders from hell!

At one time renowned for his 3.5 girlfriends in Berkeley, Tim recently took the plunge and got married. His wife Karin will vouch for the fact that Tim is an all around nice guy. But then, you have to be if you want to work here. It's required!



TIM WALLACE



JAMES W. CHAPMAN

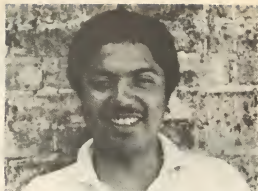
J.W. CHAPMAN has a tough job. He's our Games and Pocket-books Purchaser as well as the Citrus Heights store manager. On top of that, he attends a lot of conventions--I see him working the tables more often than not. Does this man ever rest? Well, apparently he has time to collect old comics and to call the Bahamas on C&C's tab! (Just foolin', folks!)

ED HERMANN, a.k.a. The Batman, fearless crimefighter and comic book pricer, is seen here meeting with our intrepid leader who has traversed the treacherous meadows of Bloom County to make this visit. In addition to running The Batcave, our second warehouse, in Sacramento, Ed goes for gaming, new comics, computers, and mayhem! 29



ED HERMANN

His mind permanently warped through neurophysiology experiments at UC-Berkeley, CARL DAVIDSON started working for Comics & Comix... he'd been here for three years before he realized it! Crazy from neuro-anatomical brain-mapping, he turned to Japanese videos, books, toys (and beer). Over the course of a year, he's regained his sanity but still doesn't understand Japanese. (And we still can't figure out whether he even understands English!) Unfortunately, last reports were that he was losing his tenuous grip on reality from having to answer 786 ROBOTECH questions in a one week period!



CARL DAVIDSON



TOM KEE

The other half of the old comics administrative team is TOM KEE. He works as Dick Swan's assistant, and while Dick is away buying a collection of X-MEN or a full DC collection, Tom works in the warehouse (better known as the Cornfield, an obscure but affectionate reference to a TWILIGHT ZONE episode starring a very young Billy Mumy). Another great trivia buff, Tom is a strong admirer of George Perez' art and collects mostly DCs. 'Nuff said.

WENDI LEE--that's me, folks--has been with C&C since February and her interests are many. She's been collecting comic books with quality stories and good art for about five years. She recently discovered Dungeons & Dragons and you'll find her casting spells and fighting bad guys on Saturday nights. When she's not writing for THE TELEGRAPH WIRE or working with Dick Swan and Tom Kee, she works on her own freelance writing projects. She has about a five-month backlog of comic book reading to do and constantly complains about there being not enough hours in the day. However, she really loves working for C&C and wouldn't trade her busy schedule for anything else.



WENDI LEE



ROBERT BRADLEY

Our bronzed California boy, ROBERT BRADLEY is a real floater. He drives from one store to the next, delivering our weekly supply. Robert has been with C&C for about the past year and he'd still rather listen to heavy metal--or attend an occasional Yes concert--than read a comic book! His interests span from baseball season to baseball season.



ANN EAGAN

DIANA SCHUTZ is our illustrious editor, as most of you know. What some of you don't know is that soon after she was lured from Canada to sunny California in 1981, she stopped sweeping the Berkeley floor and began working directly for Central as Dick Swan's assistant in the area of old comics purchasing and systematization. (What bins?!) Di was trusting enough to have other people comment on working with her, instead of writing her own description. Heh heh heh.

The Chief--oops! I mean John Barrett--took the time out to make these comments: "Di's been a major force in bringing the women's perspective into the comics industry. She's also been a major force in bringing in large phone bills...but seriously, Di made inroads towards getting books that women would want to read and she has a great future in the comics biz. She's a good writer, a great editor, very insightful, talented, and one of the best in the business...by the way, you won't write any of this down, will you? It's all true but I'd hate to tell her that!"

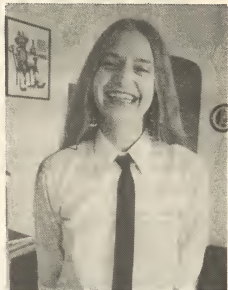
[Hey boss, does that mean I can finally have that raise?! -- ed.]

There you have it, folks, straight from the top.

ANN EAGAN wears a lot of hats. Her official title is that of Images Purchaser, meaning she gets to order our t-shirts, cards, and posters--not to mention all those dirty, filthy, disgustingly sexy underground comix! (Lucky gal!)

AnnE says that LOVE AND ROCKETS is her killer favorite comic and she hopes someday to adopt Jaime Hernandez. She also collects international comics from China, Germany, France, and other exotic places. (Must be all those Navy connections, huh kid?)

From her vantage point in the Berkeley store, AnnE is in a good position to scout for potential lunch dates. Outside of work, she likes Charlotte's aerobics class, popcorn at the movies, and cruising in her Comet!



DIANA SCHUTZ

Photo (C) Clay Geerdes

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ROMAN'S ARENA



Recommended



Recommended with reservations/For fans, collectors, or other specialized audiences only



Send in the lions!

Poor Gary Groth. His is a sad tale I'm sure we've all heard at one time or another, in which someone has a close encounter with that foxy lady known as Success, and then goes through endless frustration trying to get a second date.

For Groth, that first date occurred when he received a review copy of a self-published comic called *LOVE AND ROCKETS* by the then-unknown Los Hermanos Hernandez. He immediately wrote a glowing review of the book in *THE COMICS JOURNAL* (which made people sit up and take notice—unqualified praise from Gary Groth is as rare as tie-dyed Kryptonite), and soon began publishing it as the flagship title of Fantagraphics Books.

LOVE AND ROCKETS was a godsend, a vindication of all the high standards of graphic art that Gary stood for (and harangued his readership endlessly about). It received outrageous praise from all corners, and earlier this year took the prestigious Yellow Kid award at Lucca, making it a success on an international level as well.

Since then, Groth has added a number of titles to the Fantagraphics line, in quest of that elusive Second Date with Success. But personally, I think he's trying too hard. The unqualified praise which was once so stingily meted out by Groth practically leaps out of his throat today when discussing his own titles—but while Fantagraphics *does* put out some nice stuff, most of their comics simply haven't earned the same rep as *LAR*, and such praise only serves to cheapen the genuine accomplishment made by the Hernandezes.

So, for the sake of a little perspective: Fantagraphics Books, welcome to the Arena!



DALGODA

Thanks in part to one of the finest advertising campaigns an alternative comic has ever had, this title, perhaps even more than *LOVE AND ROCKETS*, is the one people think of when somebody says, "Fantagraphics." Scripter Jan Strnad serves up well-paced

stories with intelligent dialogue (as well as more than a few bad puns) in telling the tale of an intelligent dog-like alien sent to Earth to recruit help against an alien armada. While I doubt it will ever make people forget his "Arabian Night" collaborations with Rich Corben, *DALGODA* still shows Strnad to be one of the better writers in the industry, and is a pleasing, engaging read.

The art, however, is another story. Dennis Fujitake has been with Groth and Fantagraphics for a long time, doing spot illos and the occasional cover for *THE COMICS JOURNAL*, and I can't help thinking that the assignment to *DALGODA* is a reward for his many years of service, rather than for any graphic excellence on Dennis' part. Fujitake's work is divided neatly into four major influences: Steve Ditko, Gil Kane, Moebius, and Hergé (of *TINTIN* fame), and you can see where the Hergé eyes leave off and the Ditko hands begin. His figures are stiff and unconvincing; they move like those cardboard posable figures you tack up on your door for Halloween, and the only difference between Dalgoda's tail at rest and Dalgoda's tail wagging are a few poorly placed action lines. He's good with light comedy (such as the intro of Gunnar in #2), but his work has a long way to go.

The coloring is by Kenneth Smith, and it's first-class awful. Blotchy and experimental, it makes everybody in the book look like terminal skin-disease cases.

The back-up feature, "Grimwood's Daughter," by Strnad and Kevin Nowlan, on the other hand, is superb, and rates an enthusiastic Thumbs Up. In fact, the back-ups may soon be the real reason for buying *DALGODA*, since the lunatic team of Alan Moore and Steve Parkhouse take up residence there as of issue #7 with their madcap surrealist comedy, "The Bojeffries Saga" (late of *WARRIOR*). If you like laughing, make this one a must-buy item.



NEAT STUFF

Peter Bagge's exhilarating brand of cartoon anarchy has changed little since the days when he did album covers for The Ramones—and I'm so glad! Bagge's work is the latest variation of a noble tradition whose most recent avatar was the late Tex Avery: rock 'em, sock 'em, no-holds-barred, flat-out craziness, in which anything is possible. Coupled to the "there is no future" sentiment of the punk movement, Bagge gives us the Screwy Squirrel of the '80s in *Girls*, a selfish, manipulating little brat motivated solely by whim. *NEAT STUFF* also features a lot of other, well, neat stuff—there's only one piece which I can say didn't fracture me (#1's

"Vomit Glossary," which would've been funnier as a series of trading cards). Not for the easily offended, NEAT STUFF is abrasive, occasionally gross--and side-splittingly funny. Show us more of what you do for laffs, Girly Girl!



HUGO

Speaking of classic animated cartoonists, here's a creator who wears his influences on his sleeve, and a creation that doesn't live up to them. Milton Knight Jr. has been chronicling the misadventures of his cat court jester since the days of the late COMICS TIMES (who published the first collection of "Hugo" strips). Like his first major influence, the legendary Fleischer brothers, Knight writes solid, earthy, likable characters, with all the good-natured bawdiness associated with the best Betty Boop cartoons, and crafts his stories with care and an eye for the unique wrinkle (such as his inspired ending to the "Baron Von Bloodshed" story in #1).

Knight's other major influence is Paul Terry during his pre-Mighty Mouse days. Here's what Knight bases his art on, and here's where he falls flat. Like many others, Knight appears to have spent time learning how to imitate the cartoons he so admires,

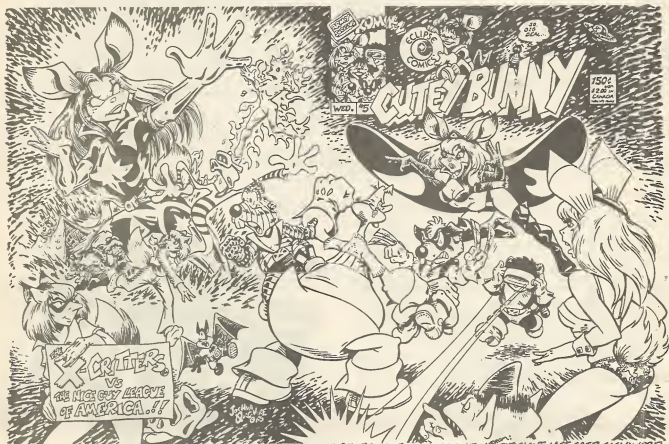
rather than learning how to draw. As a result, it becomes difficult for the reader to lose himself in the story; his attention is constantly being drawn away by the vague feeling that something doesn't look quite right.

I like HUGO personally, but I'm not blind to its drawbacks. At this point, I'd like to see Knight either drop out for a while and improve his craft, or else find a competent finisher (Leslie Cabarga? Trina Robbins?) to clean up the deficiencies in his rendering. These characters are too good to sit still for second-rate artwork.

As my deadline approaches, the first issue of the MECHANICS mini-series has yet to be released, but I'll recommend it to you anyway. The original story (from LOVE AND ROCKETS #2) was excellent, and with the addition of the superb color work of Paul (MR. X) Rivoche, it can only look better!

Finally, in case I didn't make it clear enough last issue: JOURNEY, by Billy Loeb, is a terrible book, gets an unqualified C- from me, and I want you should all start buying it!!!

Pretty please?



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INTRODUCING...

C/FO!

by Ann Schubert

We tend to think of animation as cute cartoon characters who entertain children on Saturday morning so Mom and Dad can sleep in late. Now is the time to come out of the closet and find out what animation is really all about.

Actually, it's a respected art form for adults as well as kids in every country...except in the U.S.A. Have you ever passed the "Animation Room" at a comics or gaming convention and wondered at the sophisticated animation being played out on the screen but been unable to understand a word of what's going on? It may have put you off at the time, but never fear. Now is your chance to find out about Japanese animation from the people who study it seriously. It's similar to collecting foreign-language comic books. If you want to pursue your interest, there's help on the way in the form of a group called the Cartoon/Fantasy Organization, better known as C/FO. C/FO is an international non-profit club that promotes the appreciation of animation from all around the world.

For instance, the most popular animation from Japan that's made its way to the U.S. is ROBOTECH, and STARBLAZERS comes in a close second. What we see on TV as ROBOTECH and STARBLAZERS are really watered-down versions of Japanese productions that were much longer and more complex. It's common for foreign animation to have the violence edited and the plot altered or simplified before we see it. It has to fit in with the network standards to air on the public stations.

On the other hand, C/FO shows the original uncut versions of many Japanese shows at local chapters and conventions all over the country.

Ten years ago, it was only a dream that a few people thought would never happen: being able to gather for showing and trading their videos with others.

Eight years ago, Fred Patten and Mark Merlino made that dream come true by founding the Cartoon/Fantasy Organization. With the interest in animation on a constant rise, the C/FO came out with a magazine and helped start the now twenty chapters that exist throughout the U.S. and Canada.

What binds C/FO together besides their bimonthly magazine is the correspondence, the trading of information, and the interest in translating Japanese mangas and anime.

Many comic book stores have started carrying Japanese comics, including Comics & Comix, which also has the C/FO magazine in stock.

C/FO membership numbers fluctuate, but the average is about 400 members throughout the years. If you'd like more information about C/FO, you can write to the main address:

Cartoon/Fantasy Organization
401 South La Brea Avenue
Inglewood, CA 90301

They will send you a list of chapters in your area.

ROBOTECH's New Generation:
Rand, Annie, and
Scott Bernard



(C) Harmony Gold U.S.A. Inc. /
Tatsunoko Production Co. Ltd.



Kodai and Yuki,
from FINAL YAMATO

(C) L. Matsumoto



Dana Sterling and crewmates,
from ROBOTECH MASTERS

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A Six-Issue Epic...

Greylore™

By David Campiti & Bo Hampton

Take one of the most startlingly-talented illustrators to come down the pike in years, who has cut his teeth at the "Big Two" and craves a project he can sink those teeth into... add a writer/package with a track record ranging from evocative stories for direct sales publishers to DC's *Superman*... then spice it with a tincture of a fantasy painter's palette... and offer them a chance to create for a new comic book company.

What do you have? A company called Sirius Comics — a division of New Sirius Productions, Inc. and a project called GREYLORE — a new heroic action-adventure series.

GREYLORE offers the awesome pencils and inks of Wade "Bo" Hampton, literate action stories by David Campiti (with Kevin Juare & Peter Palmer), and painted color by Scott Rockwell.

This six-issue limited series premieres August 6, 1985.

Call It Fate

"A costumed adventurer named Baru Greylore is a rogue — a thief, a floo, a charmer... whatever the 'role' calls for to bring him the good life," explains co-writer David Campiti.

Imagine an awe-inspiring Library, its books containing all knowledge and all temptation. A master wizard named Saggan Necroooman vanishes — with him the secrets needed to watch over and guide two worlds, the sordid Stormgren and the futuristic Sirius. Their fates have been linked since time began.



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However, actions on Stormgren now go against the grain — something causes events to happen which were never ordained by destiny's demands! It not only runs late afloat for Stormgren, but it generates a backlash that harms Sirius, as well.

Enter Sorrel Amesous, an apprentice to Saggan Necroooman, who is helpless before the troubles that transpire. Seeking aid, he brings from suspended animation a wonderful, winged creature — the smart-mouthed Pox, who is far, far more than it seems to be.

Sorrel journeys to the Library of all knowledge and learns of the swashbuckling Baru Greylore. This man's aura is distinctly out of place on Stormgren — as if he should have been born on Sirius, instead. As the mystery grows, Sorrel learns enough to approach Greylore, forcing him to perform a series of incredible deeds — the stuff of which heroes are made, in an attempt to restore destiny to its proper course.

The saga of GREYLORE tells of what transpires when Baru Greylore reluctantly accepts the challenge!

A Pox Upon Them

"GREYLORE began as a series called Wizard, which Kevin Juare & Peter Palmer created, about a young man whose actions affect two linked worlds," explains editor Cynthia J. Wood. "David Campiti wanted to do a fun-to-read adventure book with plenty of excitement. Yet it had to tie into the 'Living Universe' concept that encompasses much of his work, and have a strong lead hero."

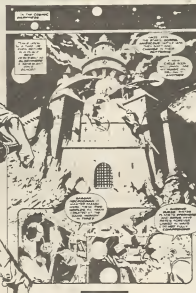
"The way things are going, I really like this series," says Bo Hampton. "I hope it goes beyond the six-issue 'epic' that David, Kevin, and Pete have written. If so, I plan to stick with it!"

So does Sirius Comics — which is proud to make GREYLORE its flagship title.

GREYLORE #1 will ship August 6, 1985, with #2 following in September. With #3 through #6, it will assume a bi-monthly schedule through early summer 1986.

GREYLORE #1: "A Pox Upon Him." 32 pages, white stock, \$1.50. Cover: Bo Hampton. Full-process color.

Remember: Tell your comics shop owner to order and reserve copies for you!



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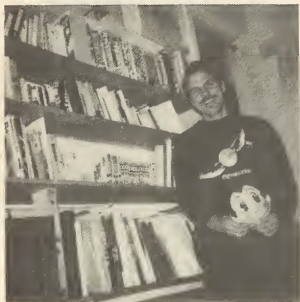
ASK
FOR IT

THE MANGA THAT STOMPED JAPAN

by Ann Schubert

Hey trivia fans! What nation reads one billion comic books a year? Let's try another question: What country prints one third of its reading material in the form of comic books? No, it's not the U.S.A.--try Japan. The land of zen, grace, and tradition lives by the turn of a page these days. Comic books are an acceptable art form and recreation for all ages in Japan.

One of the people who became interested in this phenomenon is the man who wrote a comprehensive study of mangas. His name is Frederik L. Schodt and his book is titled **MANGA! MANGA!** This is currently the only book of its kind on mangas. Schodt wrote it as a study of comics as an integral part of the Japanese culture. It's a comic book enthusiast's dream, complete with hundreds of illustrations, captions, and footnotes. At the end of the book are pages from four mangas translated into English.



FREDERIK L. SCHODT, author of **MANGA! MANGA!**

Schodt has spent an inordinate amount of time in Japan and his interest was piqued when he went to college in Tokyo and found his academic peers reading comic books openly. Being familiar enough with the language, he picked up a manga and read it. Schodt soon found himself doing research on mangas. At first, it was hard because libraries didn't carry a lot of information on mangas. However, he found a privately owned and operated membership library in Tokyo to facilitate his research.

Schodt also gained entrance to the Kodansha Publishing Company's private collection and archives, and spent many days exploring the dust-covered volumes therein. Museums were helpful to Schodt who photographed their early examples of cartoon strips and political comics to complete **MANGA! MANGA!** Schodt has worked as a translator, interpreter, and writer in San Francisco for eight years. He translates for many of the great cartoonists from Japan and has assisted in the production of **PHOENIX 2772**, a movie production in Japan. When I ventured to compare Osamu Tezuka to Walt Disney (a common misconception),

Translated into English, **THE ROSE OF VERSAILLES** is one of Fred Schodt's favorite stories.



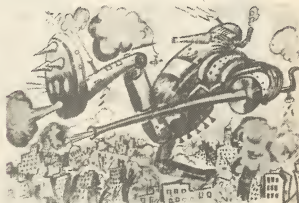
(C) R. Ikeda

Schodt referred to Tezuka as "100% artist in his 40 years of cartooning. He has a sense of curiosity about everything...Disney was more of an Idealist."

One of the big questions on my mind was why we don't see more English translations of Japanese comics. Schodt replied, "There are a lot of people who would love to export their comics to the States but cultural differences and values make it too difficult to simply translate and sell." He went on to say that **NAUSICAA** and **COBRA** are mangas that could cross over easily into American culture, but publishers would have to be willing to risk the investment as well as reverse the artwork--we read comics "backwards" in the U.S.!

Schodt also commented on American comics like **ELFQUEST** and **ZOT!** as similar in style to Japanese comics. The quality storytelling techniques used by both Wendy Pini and Scott McCloud are very close in concept to Japan's mangas.

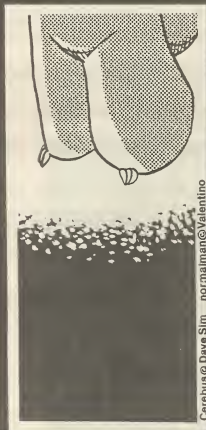
Please remember that we've included several people for you to contact about Japanese animation and comic books in this issue of **THE TELEGRAPH WIRE**. Comics & Comix will also be very happy to help you with information. Just give your local store a call...that's why we're here.



(C) R. Yokoyama

1943 heralded the first appearance of the Japanese giant robot.

normalman *LEARNS* WHAT THE "MAGIC" IS...



Cerebus © Dave Sim normalman © Valentino

...GUESS WHO TELLS HIM!



normalman 10

Featuring a special guest appearance by
CEREBUS (written and drawn by Dave Sim)
from

**Renegade
Press**

Animé Hai!

by Wendi Lee

What do Frank Miller, Wendy Pini, and Scott McCloud have in common? If you immediately answer "comics," that's right! We're not talking just any comics: these artists have an interest in Japanese comic book art. Japanese animé and manga have recently been hitting the American shores like a tsunami (better known as a tidal wave). American versions of animation like SPACESHIP YAMATO, better known here as STARBLAZERS, and the MACROSS/ROBOTECH series have caught the interest of kids from ages five to fifty. Japanese comic book art has been around longer than these few examples and has been a strong influence on some of the hottest artists of the past decade.

Frank Miller is a perfect example. He's had a tenacious interest in any samurai art published in the last few centuries. His action-packed art and clean, stylistic layouts made DAREDEVIL one of the most popular comic books released in the last ten years. Miller proved that a comic book can tell a quality story without the gratuitous captions that usually accompany stiff, inactive panels.

Osamu Tezuka has been one of the greatest influences on American comic book artists. Wendy Pini has been collecting his art for many years, before his work became widely appreciated in this country. Perhaps that's why Pini's ELFQUEST has the admiration of so many Japanese animé fans. Osamu Tezuka is best known in the U.S. for KIMBA, THE WHITE LION and ASTRO BOY. Both were Saturday morning cartoons during the late '60s and are still rerun in certain parts of the country. There are big differences between the version aired here and the one shown in Japan. In the American version, Kimba is a young cub throughout his television career; in Japan, he grows up, mates, and has cubs of his own. But the differences go beyond the development of character.

When American television bought KIMBA, it was intended that Kimba would entertain young children, but not grow up with these same kids. Therefore, Kimba remains in his youthful state, knocking down helicopters and fighting off the bad guys. In Japan, KIMBA is a political analogy of civilization at its best and worst.

Needless to say, KIMBA is only one example. Not all animé is as profound, but the plots are almost always intriguing. Tezuka has been called the "Walt Disney of Japan." While the title is flattering, Frederik L. Schodt, author of MANGA! MANGA!, points out that this isn't really true. While Disney was certainly involved with the creation of a number of timeless characters, he was also an astute businessman. Disneyland and Disneyworld are proof of his true genius. Tezuka, on the other hand, is strictly a cartoonist. He has been a prolific one also, creating more enjoyment for comic fans than can be covered in this one article.

One of the problems a novice has when investigating the world of Japanese comics is the number of confusing terms used for comic books. When we try to distinguish American comics from Japanese comics, the words "animé" and "manga" generally appear. Not all animé is manga, but all manga is animé. Is that clear? Do you feel like you're in Logic 101 yet? The way I understand it, "animé" is short for "animation." That makes sense. Therefore, "animé" is "cartoon" to us. "Animé book" is used to describe a comic book and you can be pretty safe with that term.

If you're not sure about the word "manga," you are in good company. Ann Schubert, a member of the Cartoon/Fantasy Organization, described it to me this way: "Manga isn't just a comic book. It's an action book as well. It's like frame-by-frame animation



A sample of Frank Miller's work, from the ELEKTRA Graphic Novel.

(C) Marvel Comics Group

that tells a story from the cinematic point of view rather than a storytelling point of view...fewer words, more action."

One of the most recent examples of American manga is ZOT! by Scott McCloud. Zot is a 13-year old hero from a futuristic dimension who befriends Jenny, a 13-year old girl from our earth. Zot takes Jenny and her brother back to his home for a visit. They become involved in assassination and intrigue in Zot's world and unravel some surprising mysteries along the way. The villain is an insane character called Oekko. His head resembles the top of the Chrysler Building. ZOT! is a comic well worth investigating for those who are intrigued with the manga but want to read it in English.

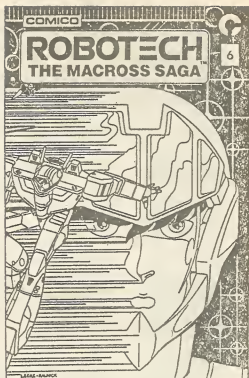


OWEN and ECLAIRÉ HANNIFEN, renowned collectors of Japanese animation and comic book art.

Owen and Eclairé Hannifen have been studying and collecting Japanese comic book art for the past twenty years. Eclairé is chronicling their collection for use by students and artists of animation, and Owen puts together the animation shows at conventions when they're invited to speak. They encourage people who show an interest in Japanese animation and comic books. Currently, their archives are open by appointment only. You can reach them at (415) 469-9523 and get more information about their non-profit business. The Hannifens are well known for their animation marathons at conventions like Oundragon, the gaming convention.

I was given a tour of their collection a few months ago at their house in San Francisco. The collection takes up at least one full room and spills out into the living room area! They have robots, tapes, magazines, and comic books. You could spend weeks there just going through the videotapes!

A relative newcomer to the field of Japanese animation, James Hudnall nevertheless has amassed an impressive private videotape collection within the past three years. He became interested in anime when a friend played a tape of ADIEU GALAXY EXPRESS for him. Since then, Hudnall has become a west coast authority on Japanese animation and heads the Sonoma County chapter of C/FO. He also handles marketing and sales for Eclipse Comics, publishers of ZOT!.



(C) Harmony Gold U.S.A. Inc./Tatsunoko Production Co. Ltd. ROBOTECH is a trademark owned and licensed by Revell, Inc.

When asked if other comic book artists were interested in Japanese comic art, Hudnall listed Will Meugniot, Timothy Truman, Brent Anderson, Lela Dowling, and Christopher Claremont among the converted.

If you're interested in obtaining more information on Japanese comic art, you can reach Owen and Eclairé Hannifen at (415) 469-9523, or contact your local chapter of the Cartoon/Fantasy Organization.



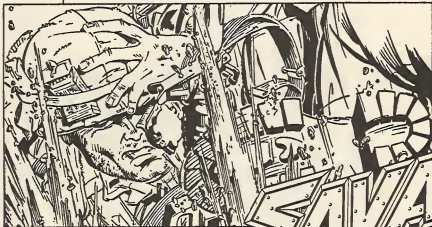
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**SAVAGE
TALES**

MARVEL

THE STATE OF THE ART

Comics and Games!

By Steve Perrin

"Comics and Comix, Toys and Games," comes the cheery voice on the other end of the phone. Games? Why is a comic book store selling Monopoly and chess?

Of course; when you step into the stores, you can see that we don't sell Monopoly or chess sets. Instead, you find a display of colorfully covered boxes and books featuring scenes reminiscent of the comic books and paperbacks displayed elsewhere in the store. In fact, careful perusal shows that some of the same artists are doing both. Apparently, these boxes and books are the "games" mentioned on the phone and on an increasing number of C&C store signs.

The object of this column is to explore the connections between these games and the illustrated literature we all follow. In future columns I will answer questions, review games, preview upcoming comic-related games and game-related comics, and generally discuss one of the common points between the hobbies of comic collecting and game playing--the exploration of fantasy worlds.

Fantasy worlds? When I've been asked about my diverse interests of comic collecting, science fiction fandom, the Society for Creative Anachronism, and simulation game playing, my standard answer has been, "I collect fantasy worlds." This is the factor that all of these interests have in common, the ability to use them to explore other worlds than the one I live in. Sometimes the other world is vastly different from the one around us, sometimes the new world is sufficiently similar to the "real" world to gain insight into its workings. In either case, each interest provides me, and you, with relief from the day-to-day and the chance to let our imaginations soar.

Most of you who are reading this already know how comics and books can have this effect. It's my job to explain how you glide on the wings of imagination with games.

The important thing about the type of games I am dealing with is that they are "simulation games," a term I used above. This means that they are less abstract attempts to duplicate actual and possible events than the aforementioned chess and Monopoly. Chess, of course, is an abstract simulation of a battle, but players do not get the feel of vast armies moving on an actual battlefield. The real point of the game is the contest of skill between players. Monopoly is based on real estate wheeling and dealing, but the necessity to continually circle the playing board and the high preponderance of luck over strategy in winning the game removes any feeling of participation in actual market manipulation.

Simulation games attempt to get the players as close as possible to all the stresses and strains of the situation being simulated. The actual situations can be as far-fetched as the fantasy world of TSR's *Dungeons & Dragons* or as up-to-the-minute as Blade's *Mercenaries, Spies, and Private Eyes*, but the games attempt to bring the players into a feeling of direct

participation, so that, for instance, the player of a warrior knows that it is his abilities and tactics that can make the difference between his survival or death in his battle against a werewolf.

To keep the players from coming home festooned with sword wounds and bite marks, the games usually rely on dice to determine the results of these simulated combats. However, the designers of the games base the results of dice rolls on as much as is known of the real world effects of the weapons and stratagems being simulated. Each designer, of course, bases his determination of the odds on his own prejudices and the objectives of the game design. A designer whose objective is accurate simulation can include pages of elaborate tables based on every facet and peculiarity of particular caliber of gun or weight of sword. Other designers, seeking a quick, playable game, make the effects of weapons more abstract, using only general categories such as "pistol" and "rifle," or "sword" and "spear," without traveling the divergent paths these categories have wandered through over the centuries. I've played both varieties and each design objective can result in an enjoyable game.

Most of the above examples are taken from role playing games. Role playing games are a major subset of simulation games. In a role playing game, often abbreviated RPG, each player (with one exception) takes the role of a particular person, such as a warrior or a magician or a superhero or a spy, depending on the game. The player who does not play a single character instead plays the *world* the other players are playing in. He is the gamemaster, often abbreviated GM, and he acts as the director of the action and the referee of the game. A GM will create a situation and populate it with characters not played by players, often called "non-player characters" or NPCs. The GM will play each NPC as he or she relates to the characters played by the other players, using these NPCs as employers, helpers, encounters, and adversaries for the player-run characters, often abbreviated PCs. In many ways, the GM acts as a host to the party of players, showing them his world and letting them wander through it.

My favorite way of describing such role playing games is as "improvisational radio theater." The GM provides a general situation, but the players must provide the dialogue and precipitate the actual action. Since all the action can take place with pencil and paper, without board or markers, the action takes place in the minds of the players, just like a radio drama. Many gamers use plastic or metal figurines and elaborate maps the figurines can be moved around on. In this case, the play becomes improvisational puppet theater. The results are much the same.

In one important way, the above-described role playing is different from other interests such as comic or toy or book collecting. A collector is often alone in his interest, the only person he knows

who is fascinated by his particular field of interest. If they can find one another, collectors often band together into clubs or maintain friendly relationships, but collecting is generally a lonely activity. Gaming, on the other hand, is very much a social activity. Two or more people have to get together to share a game. If the gamers share other interests, such as collecting, so much the better. This gives them something to talk about during the slow periods of the game, yet allows them to concentrate on the game when concentration is necessary.

In future columns I will go into these points a bit further, and do everything else I promised earlier in this column. If this introduction has given you something you want to discuss further, or you have any other comments and/or inquiries about games and comics specifically or in general, write to me at:

Steve Perrin
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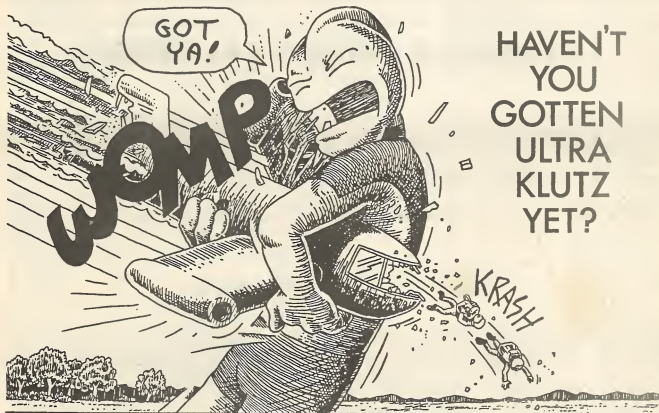


First place winner MARC CHU with his Zentraedi battlepod at C&C's Model Building Contest, held April 27th at the Lombard Street store.

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Spin your own discount with the popular **WHEEL OF FORTUNE!** Discounts are good all day at our Citrus Heights store.

Sunday, August 11

Join us for the **MINIATURE FANTASY FIGURE PAINTING CONTEST** with special guest judge **STEVE FERRIN**. Final judging will take place at the Solano Mall store at 2 p.m.

Friday, August 16

Comics & Comix proudly presents artist **TOM YEATES** celebrating the release of **TIMESPIRITS #6**, at our Berkeley store from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Saturday, August 17

The **WHEEL OF FORTUNE** moves around to our Lombard Street store in San Francisco. Join the fun and spin to win!

Saturday, August 24

Comics & Comix welcomes **GE** creator/writer/artist **MATT WAGNER** and **MAGE** inker **SAM KIETH** for an autograph party at our Palo Alto store, from noon to 2 p.m.

MAGE TOUR, featuring **MATT WAGNER** and **SAM KIETH**, then moves to our Berkeley store for the second auto-

graph party of the day, from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. Special guest appearance by **THE SHADE!**

Meanwhile, Fairfield customers can spin their own discount on the wild and woolly **WHEEL OF FORTUNE**, all day at the Solano Mall store.

Saturday, August 31

South Bay customers get their turn at fabulous savings by spinning the **WHEEL OF FORTUNE**, all day at our Palo Alto store.

And at our Lombard Street store in San Francisco, another crowd-pleasing **COMICS & COMIX AUCTION** will be held from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. Great deals and great fun!

Saturday, September 7

The **WHEEL OF FORTUNE** rolls over to the Sacramento store for more all-day deals!

Saturday, September 14

Spin to win with the **WHEEL OF FORTUNE**, all day at our Berkeley store.

Saturday, September 21

The **WHEEL OF FORTUNE** winds its merry way over to our Irving Street store in San Francisco. Discounts are good all day on all Comics & Comix merchandise.

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